



**THE
BEAST
OF
BRAY ROAD**

LINDA S. GODFREY

TAILING WISCONSIN'S WEREWOLF

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Linda S. Godfrey

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK is dedicated to the memory of Tundra Rose, the Lhasa apso
within whose tiny white breast beat the heart of a she-wolf.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS BOOK is the result of the observations, research, study, suggestions, and other contributions of a great many people. I acknowledge the lifelong efforts of researchers such as Loren Coleman, Jay Rath, Mark Hall, Scott Corrales, Richard Hendricks, and others for expanding and categorizing the knowledge base and otherwise making it possible for people like me to write more confidently about hidden and mysterious animals.

I owe a special debt to Richard Hendricks, of the Weird Wisconsin Web site, for his many suggestions and references, his support, and especially his helpful reading of the first draft. My deep appreciation also goes to Julie Von Bergen who helped with a final read and artists Cindy Jackson, Robh Ruppel, and Jeff Easley for allowing their depictions of “the Beast” to be reproduced here.

But most of all, I thank all the witnesses, named or anonymous, for telling their stories. Without them there would be no book.

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WEREWOLVES

Man, Beast or Monster

by Loren Coleman

THE TERM WEREWOLF has been applied to several unique beasts down through the years, especially in certain parts of North America. As you are about to discover in the book you hold in your hands, the modern story of American “werewolves” has a good chronicler.

While the broader context of these reports—which I have investigated in several of my books—embraces sightings of the triple-toed Honey Island Swamp Monster, the three-fingered and three-toed Thetis Lake Monster, and the similarly digitated Scape Ore Swamp Lizard Man, Linda Godfrey has toiled away in her neighborhood to find some unique gems to add to the literature.

“The werewolf,” John Keel writes, “can presumably pop up anywhere.”

Thinking about the related stories of the Bray Road Beast, we know now that Linda Godfrey has stumbled upon a wealth of untapped data that is here revealed more completely than ever before.

I reserve judgment on what the Beast of Bray Road might be—after all, that is the depth of the unexplained in this realm, and we may be dealing with a special regional type of Bigfoot as much as some monster of the shadowy world of the paranormal. But, nevertheless, Linda Godfrey has brought to bear a good story, and she is to be congratulated for going where few dared to venture.

Now take a moment, make certain that light is on down the hall and the front door and back door are locked, and go on this trek with Linda Godfrey to Werewolf Country.

Loren Coleman is the author of Bigfoot! The True Story of Apes in America (2003), Mothman and Other Curious Encounters (2002), Mysterious

America: The Revised Edition (2001)—all published by Paraview—and several other books on cryptozoology and the unexplained.

FOREWORD

A Marvelous Night for a Moondance

by Richard D. Hendricks

WISCONSIN. WEREWOLF.

Put the two together, and Wisconsin werewolf sounds like something from the pages of one of the Badger State's famous dreamers on the night side: Robert Bloch, Peter Straub, August Derleth.

But this isn't fiction. It's fact.

In the late twentieth century a werewolf was running around loose in heavily populated Walworth County. Sounds strange, doesn't it?

But several dozen ordinary people, all very much like you and me, were going about their daily business—raising families, visiting relatives, attending church socials, watching a Packers or Brewers game on TV, playing, working, sleeping—when an inexplicable something nosed its way into their lives, transforming their secure sense of place in the world forever—a shaggy, uncanny ... something.

People often ask me, What is the weirdest story about Wisconsin?

This is it. You're holding it in your hands.

Something was out there—and may be still—lurking around cornfields and scaring drivers, children at play, and farmers. It was seen loping across lawns, snuffling around a rock pile, taking swipes at teens on their way home from a wedding dance, clawing at bedroom windows. It didn't kick the doors down but teased from the edge of perception.

Some called it manlike; others saw it on all fours. It was hairy, often called shaggy or unkempt, seemingly intelligent, even brazen. Ethereal, yet earthy. We can thank an early witness for her description of the Beast as a werewolf. For better or worse, the term stuck.

The word *werewolf* resonates. This could have been another shaggy man story, a Bigfoot, or a misidentified dog, but the incongruity of a werewolf in late-twentieth-century small-town Wisconsin caused a stir. This wasn't the gloomy Bavarian Black Forest or a lonely windswept

mountaintop in Transylvania. This was tourism postcard families picnicking in the sun, cheese curds, bratwurst smoke in the wind, the crack of a ball on bat, Guernseys or Holsteins splashed across verdant pastures, grocery store gossips, taciturn bib-overalled farmers bumping along on tractors across dusty fields in the fading fall light ... alongside werewolves.

Strange, indeed.

If people think about werewolves at all, it's the Hollywood werewolf: Lon Chaney Jr. sporting plush facial hair and a pentagram on his palms, punished by a gypsy curse. Or maybe some special effects wizardry: torturous full-body transformations involving an explosion of sprouting hair, elongating snout, and slavering fangs in a foggy field under the brilliant yellow light of a swollen moon. In all cases, certain themes emerge: man-to-beast transformation occurring under the light of a full moon, carnage, and silver bullets or magical means to ending the werewolf's reign.

Drawn by horror show images, some people flocked to Bray Road outside of Elkhorn in pursuit of monsters. Others, hearing werewolf, thought trashy tabloids or tales from barroom drunks and immediately dismissed the whole business. They were convinced that werewolves, whether in the movies or in the news, don't happen.

But something did happen. And what happened is what *The Beast of Bray Road* is all about.

The book is unique in our state and even within the canon worldwide. Others have written about legends and real-life paranormal encounters: Robert Gard and L. G. Sorden's surveys of oddities in *Wisconsin Lore*; Charles E. and Dorothy Moulding Brown in pamphlet form on Wisconsin Native American legends, lake monsters, and buried treasure; Beth Scott, Michael Norman, and Dennis Boyer in their many books on ghosts, hauntings, and the uncanny. But none of these authors—or others—have focused on a series of interrelated phenomena tied so closely to a small geographical area.

Linda Godfrey not only covered this story for a small local newspaper but also lives in the affected community. She has a perspective you don't get from outsiders. She aims to tell you about not only the weird events but also what impact all this strangeness had on a town, its citizens, and the reporter.

When Godfrey caught the scent of a story, instead of ignoring the fantastic aspect of it, she did what any good reporter should do: followed leads dubious or strong, wrote about real people having strange encounters in a nonjudgmental way, and then followed the inevitable new leads. The testimony by reliable community members was intriguing and compelling and led her to pursue this hirsute will-o'-the-wisp even after the initial flurry of sightings died away.

Part of this book describes a monster scare. Monster scares happen around the world with some frequency. They follow typical rhythms, from initial reports of strange beasts; to increasing media coverage; to a zany, hall-of-mirrors monster madness, with monster-inspired drink specials at area saloons; to a motley horde of opportunists, enthusiasts, hoaxers, T-shirt vendors, criminals, and politicians all latching on to the monster for their own ends and needs; to community laughingstock; and ending with the whole story sliding into the abyss of memory as new community concerns arise. Nothing is ever solved; only mystery remains.

Wisconsin has seen its share of unknown visitors whose arrival caused widespread hoopla. In the mid-1970s, Elmwood was agog over flying saucers; April 1978 saw the great Waukesha County kangaroo hunt; on March 30, 1981, the Mineral Point Vampire flitted briefly before the eyes of a young police officer; UFOs buzzed Belleville, New Glarus, and Waunakee in 1987; satanist scares scoured the state in 1988, from Shell Lake and St. Croix Falls to Sun Prairie, Cross Plains, and Wausau; phantom shopping mall abductors skulked across the 1990s.

Ultimately, monster scares are more a sociological than a paranormal phenomenon. Monsters—flesh and blood or insubstantial—may drift in and out of our consciousness, but it is always humans, and human reactions, that are revealed under a full moon spotlight.

The other portion of the book illustrates that interesting corollary known to the pursuers of weirdness: weirdness also pursues you. Newspapers, radio, television, the movies, the curious, true believers, scoffers, skeptics, and the mentally unbalanced all came baying in pursuit of Godfrey herself. They come calling still.

Set aside your preconceived notions of werewolves, of monsters. Godfrey has it exactly right: her goal isn't to convince you of the reality of monsters or to force-feed you her own pet theories as to what the Beast is—or was—but to tell you what happened and offer reactions and reality

checks, the good and the bad, the weird and the sublime, the humor and the terror. As your tour guide to the mystery of the Beast of Bray Road—and the people who encountered it—she’s often amazed and bemused at the twists and tricks life has in store, despite one’s own best efforts and insistence otherwise.

We all owe her a great deal of gratitude for writing this book, which ensures that this real-life beastly tale won’t be lost to history. Through her research Godfrey has unearthed scores of encounters not previously made public. She shows that, far from weirdness being a one-time occurrence, the world is far stranger than we think, and that when we least expect it, the unknown can, and will, force its wily snout past any social or personal barriers we’ve erected.

Nor should we forget the people who gave testimony in the face of skeptical neighbors and public mockery. Many went on record, letting their names and faces be published alongside their claims. Some stopped talking or moved away to get out from under the glaring public eye. Others stayed; this was home, their unwavering conviction in the reality of their experiences their shield. Talking about monsters takes courage. We should both congratulate and admire them; it’s so much easier to remain silent, to pretend nothing ever happened. Without them there would be no story.

Monsters happen. Now turn the page. This is the weirdest story I know.

Richard D. Hendricks is the co-author of *Weird Wisconsin; Your Guide to Wisconsin’s Local Legends and Best Kept Secrets*.

INTRODUCTION

A Sight in the Night

But though he was a wolf, he retained some traces of his original shape. The grayness of his hair was the same, his face showed the same violence, his eyes gleamed as before, and he presented the same picture of ferocity.

—Ovid (B.C.–A.D. 18)

SO WROTE the Roman poet Ovid about conflicted Greek king Lycaon, who was condemned by Zeus to live out his life as a wolf. Although other versions of man-turned-animal (or vice versa) are found in ancient and modern cultures around the world, most people in the Western world today dismiss werewolves as superstitions from the past.

Maybe that is why it so shocked the world in the early 1990s when people around the small town of Elkhorn, Wisconsin, claimed to see strange, hairy, wolf-headed creatures that sometimes walked upright and seemed not afraid of man. “If there were such a thing as a werewolf,” said witness Lori Endrizzi, “this would be it.” The canid sensation was soon dubbed “Beast of Bray Road,” after the location of the first reported sightings.

If the witnesses had said they saw Bigfoot, I doubt the story would have received so much attention. Sightings of the eight- to ten-foot-high hirsute and manlike being known as “Sasquatch” in the American Northwest and as “Yeti” in the Himalayas (not to mention dozens of other names around the world), seem to pop up in newspapers at regular intervals. Werewolf sightings ... not so much.

It was certainly shocking to me. One day I was a small-town wife, mom, and local newspaper reporter and cartoonist; the next thing I knew I was fielding questions from media around the country about werewolves! And I had no idea what a long-term world of strangeness I was about to delve into.

One national TV show producer asked, “So Linda, ... *what is going on in Walworth County?*” That question has always been the crux of the matter.

Something I didn’t anticipate was that, almost from the start, a debate sprang up over whether this thing people were seeing was an animal from our everyday world, just perhaps a bit off-kilter, or whether it involved the realm beyond our first five senses.

I was surprised that some witnesses felt they were seeing something “demonic,” while others insisted it was just a supersized animal with an attitude. Then some reporters began asking the witnesses if they had experienced paranormal events themselves, anything from spotting space aliens to having out-of-body experiences at times other than when the Green Bay Packers scored touchdowns. To my surprise, a few said yes.

As a result, you may find this book has a sort of Jekyll and Hyde flavor. If I stick to only “rational” explanations for the Beast, I leave out a galaxy of information on the “irrational,” which is, frankly, much more fun. Sometimes it’s difficult to separate the two categories, as the border between them occasionally turns porous, allowing things to seep fluidly between.

I didn’t have to make any of it up, either. The information on both the natural and the woo-woo comes from ten years of researching the deep recesses of were-creature lore. Some material came from books I never knew existed or never would have previously thought to look for; a lot came from many helpful friends along the way. A warning: some of it may take you places you never thought you would go—places I never thought I’d go, either. But having been there and back, I can tell you it’s not a bad tour. At least no one inspects your luggage.

Everyone asks me if I’ve seen the werewolf. I never have, even though I’ve become the unofficial biographer of this most elusive subject. My only glimpses into its life are in the stories of brief encounters with stunned witnesses. There’s no paper trail, no smoking videotape or even a blurry still photo, no plaster casts of tracks. We lack samples of its fur and have not even found a suspicious pile of scat.

The stories, then, are my focus. They are arranged not exactly in the order they happened but by their relationships to one another in type or geography. To help you with the chronology of the sightings, a list of encounters arranged by year is included near the end of the book. And although, as noted, there are also legends and theories from other places and

times, this is not a comprehensive compendium of werewolves; I've had to choose those tales that seemed most specific and enlightening to the Bray Road lore.

There is a saying among scientists that "the observer changes the observed." I've always tried not to do that, but I'm well aware that by writing articles on the phenomena, there's a chance I could have influenced new sightings or even recollections of old ones. To help take that into consideration, I've included some history of my own dance in the werewolf's shadow as journalist, TV show consultant, and even screenwriter.

I readily admit my biases, but I try to live by the credo of an old poster I once had that said, "The mind is like a parachute. It functions best when open."

I also must warn people who take their werewolves extremely seriously that I am a humor writer at heart, having started out as a cartoonist, and my writing style may at times seem flippant to true believers in the subject. I assure you no disrespect is meant. It's just my way of lightening what can be a dark subject. Besides, if God didn't want cartoonists to write werewolf books, He wouldn't drop piles of local stories right in their laps.

The star of the show, of course, is the somewhat mercurial Beast of Bray Road, whether flesh-and-blood werewolf or will-o'-the-wisp, demon dog, or noble animal. I advise you to drag its stories into the safest recesses of your private den; chew them over a good, long time; and make up your mind, if you do so at all, only after the marrow has been extracted and well digested.

I hope you will find them toothsome.

PART ONE

OUT OF THE WOODS

THE EMERGENCE OF THE BEAST

CHAPTER ONE

RUMORS

A SLOW NEWS WEEK.

Newspaper staffers often joke about “slow news days,” times when so few newsworthy things are happening that reporters will dip into the murky pile of “soft” stories that would normally never make it into print. These slush pickings can be slim, and if something occasionally pops up that promises the faintest aroma of meat, reporters will pounce.

It was during the pokiest of slow times, that tinselly void between Christmas and New Year’s, in late December 1991, when the story of a Wisconsin werewolf reared its fuzzy head. I had just recently started writing for *The Week*, then a Sunday paper distributed free to every home and business in Walworth County, when the first whiff of the odd story made me prick up my ears.

Perhaps a more experienced journalist would have ignored the whole thing, but I was a greenhorn and still feeling lucky just to be writing for a newspaper, because my degree was in art education.

Why Me? The Accidental Journalist

Although it’s not easy to get a job with a big-city, daily newspaper without a journalism degree, small-town weeklies are not always able to be so picky.

And I wasn’t trying to be a writer; I was trying to be a cartoonist. Although it is possible to be a successful cartoonist without a big syndicate

as your agent, it rarely happens. I figured the next best thing would be to just get published somewhere. So, I volunteered to do editorial cartoons for free. After a while they paid me eight whole dollars a week, about what they would pay a syndicate for a cartoon feature.

One day while the editor, Herb Moering, and I were discussing what I'd draw next, I said jokingly that it would be a lot easier if I worked there. It happened that an opening had just come up, and he hired me on the phone without even asking if I could type. Luckily for him, I could and had actually done some other writing besides cartoons. I started out "cleaning up" press releases and soon progressed to writing news and feature stories and a variety of columns. And that's how I became a journalist and eventually the keeper of the Beast of Bray Road lore.

If you guessed from this story that the newspaper did not have a large staff, you guessed right. *The Week* has always used freelancers to scour their neighborhoods for additional news and contributions, and it was one of these intrepid souls who tipped me off to the unsettling rumor that the cornfields surrounding the city of Elkhorn were being stalked by a shaggy, howling, silver bullet-worthy werewolf.

I'm pretty sure I laughed out loud.

Where and What Is Bray Road?

This wasn't exactly Transylvania we were talking about, after all. Elkhorn, with a population of about sixty-five hundred, is the exact geographical center of the square in southeastern Wisconsin that is Walworth County. It lies an hour's drive from either Madison or Milwaukee, and it's about a two-hour jaunt south to Chicago. While Walworth County has remained partially rural, it's not exactly what you'd call a wilderness area. Elkhorn, also known as "the Christmas Card Town" for its picturesque square, is the county seat.



A view down Bray Road, where it all started.

Home to two famous brass instrument companies, Elkhorn is surrounded by the rich prairie that has made it a farming mecca since pioneer days. Cornfields and dairy farms dot the land that separates Elkhorn by ten miles or so in various directions from the cities of Delavan, Whitewater, and the tourist's favorite, Lake Geneva. Elkhorn boasts its own share of lake and summer residents, with Lake Wandawega and the Lauderdale chain a few miles north of the city.

The northern section of the county is a transitional area where prairies merge with forests in the hilly Kettle Moraine State Park, a spectacular showcase of what a glacier can do given the chance to freeze and thaw over more than a few millennia.

Wildlife abounds. Sleek, corn-fed white-tailed deer nibble at a wide variety of plant life, always alert for prowling coyotes. Sandhill cranes vie with countless pesky flocks of Canada geese for sky and marshland space, and townspeople are as likely as their country friends to spot raccoons, possums, rabbits, woodchucks, and other furry things prowling their yards. I was once almost run over by a bounding white-tailed doe myself, about two blocks from downtown Elkhorn. But a werewolf ... this was definitely a new branch in the local animal kingdom.

The “Werewolf” File

A gregarious freelancer from Elkhorn who later wrote for other area newspapers had provided several stories for *The Week* by the time she

called me, and I trusted her. She also worked part time as a school bus driver, and it was this connection that provided the first link to the werewolf. She called me at home one night and said another bus driver had heard high school kids talking on the bus about what they were calling a werewolf, spotted around the vicinity of Bray Road.

Bray Road is an unlikely place to hunt for monsters of any type. A three-plus-mile-long stretch connecting Highway 11 east of Elkhorn with County Road NN, the road is a country lane lined with old family farms, marshy meadows, cornfields, and scrubby woods. The road serves as an alternative route to the county law enforcement offices, nursing home, and hospital, so it isn't exactly isolated, either. Nonetheless, people were claiming something really strange was out there.

The freelancer didn't want to write the story herself, she told me, because she knew a few of the people involved and it would pose a conflict with her job. There were hints that the occult might be involved, she added, but she hadn't been successful in proving that. She gave me the name of a woman whose daughter had seen the creature, and I told her I'd look into it. I wasn't sure at the time if I really would, especially if it involved tracking down devil worshippers, but no reporter likes to offend a local news source.

Before I called anyone, I checked with a friend's teenage daughter to see if she had heard anything about a werewolf around Elkhorn Area High School. To my surprise, she not only failed to hoot in derision, she confirmed that the werewolf was a hot topic and gave me a few more names to call. And as I asked other people around town, I discovered it wasn't just a teen wolf story. Adults were talking, too.

The next day at work, I decided to ask John Halverson, who had succeeded Moering as editor at *The Week*, what he thought about the story. Halverson thought I should at least investigate further. The paper's motto, after all, was "Never be boring." Werewolves were anything but that.

The First Witnesses

I started with the freelancer's bus driver friend, Pat Lester. Lester lived in Spring Prairie, a tiny community east of Elkhorn on Highway 11, not far from Bray Road, and was the mother of a young woman named Lori Endrizzi (her last name has since changed by marriage).

Lester told me that one day she had told Doris Gipson, a teenager who rode her bus and was also Lester's neighbor, about something "weird" Lori had seen a year or two earlier on Bray Road. As Lester told Gipson of Lori's experience with what appeared to be a wolf or large dog but with human characteristics, she noticed Gipson was looking at her with a shocked expression. Gipson had seen the exact same thing, the surprised teen told Lester, but had been too afraid to tell anyone about it.

Endrizzi had been too frightened of what she saw to spread her horror story around as well; she didn't want people to think she was crazy. But neither Gipson or Endrizzi had ever forgotten the strange creature they saw. And Lester told me she had heard some unusual howling at night not far from Spring Prairie.

Finding out that Gipson had also seen something strange, Endrizzi had recently told her story to Jon Fredrickson, animal control officer for Walworth County, hoping he could shed some light on the animal.

Unexpectedly, Endrizzi and Fredrickson had a very spooky experience while discussing the sightings. Endrizzi had always had an eerie feeling about what she had seen and, like the freelancer, thought it might be related to some type of unspecified cult activity. She and Fredrickson were discussing that possibility, she said, when suddenly, several books on a shelf fastened to the wall in Fredrickson's office jumped off the shelf "as if they were pushed," and fell to the floor. "No one had banged a door shut or anything like that," recalled Endrizzi, "so there was no reason for them to fall. The shelf had bookends on it. We just looked at each other and stopped talking about it."



Author's sketch of kneeling roadkill that appeared with the original newspaper article, December 1991.

Of course, I didn't know anything about that story at the time, but I arranged a time to meet with Endrizzi at her mother's house. I also set up an appointment with Fredrickson and paid a call on him.

Fredrickson's office was a small room in the Lakeland Animal Shelter south of Elkhorn on Highway 67. He did a lot of undercover work for the shelter, investigating "puppy mills" and cases of animal abuse. Fredrickson was the person police and citizens would call when skilled animal handling or identification was needed.

And now, people had been calling him to say they had seen what looked like a werewolf, for lack of a better term. Still, I was amazed when he pulled from his desk drawer a manila file folder in which he was keeping a list of calls concerning the mysterious animal seen around Bray and Bowers Roads. With tongue-in-cheek humor, Fredrickson had labeled the folder, "Werewolf." No books jumped off the shelf when I saw it, but then we weren't discussing paranormal activities.

In fact, Fredrickson told me he didn't believe people were seeing any sort of paranormal creature. He told me he thought it was probably a large coyote, perhaps seen leaping from an unusual angle. "If it was caught at just the exact moment it was lunging, it would have appeared to be on two legs," he explained.

Still, this was official business and the *werewolf* word had been used. And it isn't surprising that Fredrickson would have preferred to err on the side of caution when talking to a reporter, as opposed to a citizen like Endrizzi.

Once the werewolf file was shown to me, tongue in cheek or not, the story became news. Editor John Halverson agreed. The consensus was that because a variety of people were saying they had seen something and gone so far as to report it to local authorities, the story was now something the public had a right to know about. We agreed I'd talk to the witnesses, do some kind of illustration, and use the piece as the centerfold story in that Sunday's edition. We figured people would have fun or fright with it for a few weeks, and then it would be forgotten as most stories are. We figured wrongly, of course.

In the meantime, I was encouraged and a bit relieved when the witness stories turned out to be specific and quotable and, more important, when I couldn't see any evidence of collusion or fabrication. Things that sound great on the phone can often fizzle when the details are finally laid out, but after talking to the first witnesses, I knew their stories were worth telling. What I didn't realize was that this was a legend in the making.

Two for Bray Road

I met Lori Endrizzi at her mother's house, in a living room-turned-Christmas wonderland with blankets of fiberfill snow, miniature houses and snowmen, and a glowing tree. It seemed like the wrong holiday to be talking about scary creatures; the festive timing made the story seem even more surreal. Years later, the movie *The Nightmare Before Christmas* would remind me of that atmosphere: a strange combination of Halloween-type stories told amid Nativity sets and Santa Claus.

Endrizzi, a petite, dark-haired young woman who worked as a manager at an Elkhorn lounge called The Jury Room, had no trouble recalling the very scary night in question. She was driving home via Bray Road one

night two years earlier, in the fall of 1989, Endrizzi told me, “when I saw this thing on the side of the road.” It was about 1:30 in the morning, quiet and desolate, which made the creature all the more startling.

Endrizzi said its back was to her when she first sighted it, so she had a good look at its pointy ears. As she drove forward and saw the creature from the front, its position was what got her attention, however. “It was kneeling!” she said. “Its elbows were up, and its claws were facing out so I knew it had claws,” she added. “I remember the long claws.”

The claws held a chunk of what looked like a dead and flattened small mammal: roadkill. She had the impression the creature had been dining upon it. Its eyes reflected the glow of her headlights, as most animal eyes will at night, and she was surprised when the creature didn’t run away but turned its head to gaze back at her. She described the animal as “dark brownish-gray” and the size of an average man, maybe five foot seven and 150 pounds.

Determined to figure out what she had seen, Endrizzi went to the library and began searching through books until she came across an illustration labeled “werewolf” in *The Golden Book of the Mysterious* by Western Publishing, 1976. The drawing of a creature with wolflike head and human knees was it, said Endrizzi. “It was night, and it was quite late, but I know what I saw,” said Endrizzi. “You don’t mistake something like that.”

Endrizzi said the creature was so manlike that she felt right away she was seeing something supernatural. “To this day I believe it was satanic,” she told me in a recent phone interview. “It was just my feeling. I don’t really believe in werewolves, per se, but I believe something could be, well, conjured up. My grandmother was very religious and she believed it, too.”

Although another reporter would later write that Endrizzi said the creature had large calves and appeared to be like a human who had “worked out,” Endrizzi was certain she had never said that. “I wouldn’t want to give anyone the impression that what I saw was anything but ordinary human size,” she told me.

My next interviewee was Doris Gipson, whose Bray Road sighting occurred on October 31, 1991. It does seem coincidental that Gipson saw the creature on Halloween, and of course that immediately conjures thoughts of hoaxers in wolf suits. But if this was a hoaxer, it was a strangely invincible, stubborn, and very well-costumed one.

To quote my interview with her that appeared in *The Week* on December 29, 1991, Gipson said, “It was kind of smoggy out, and my front tire got lifted off the ground. I’d hit something. So I kept going about fifty or sixty feet, right before Sitler [now Hospital] Road, and then I got out of the car.” Gipson wanted to see what she hit, she explained, thinking she had run over some kind of small animal. She saw nothing on the road, however, so she walked around to the rear of her car. That’s when she saw what she’d bumped in the night ... and it was not a small animal.

“Here comes this *thing*, and it’s just running up at me! It was no dog; it was bigger than me!” she exclaimed. She noticed its big, hairy chest and made an immediate dash for her car door, barely making it inside before the creature had grabbed the rear end of her car. “I just put my foot on the gas pedal and I started going,” she said.

She didn’t get a good look at the lower part of its body but assumed it was chasing her on two legs because she could see the chest heaving as it ran, and she could hear its feet pounding the pavement. “I’ve never seen a human run like that,” she added, “and my uncle was a track star.” Gipson said she had a feeling she would have been “dinner” if the animal had caught up with her.

She estimated its size as bigger than any dog she’d ever seen and described its color as brown, with long, straight hairs. “This did not look like a German shepherd; I swear to that,” she said. Gipson did describe a creature that was larger and more muscular than the one seen by Endrizzi.

It wouldn’t be her final encounter. Gipson said she actually saw the creature again that night, after picking up a young friend from a party. The younger girl saw the creature too and said, “Look at that thing!” according to Gipson. Gipson just stepped on the gas again, she said, not wanting to hang around for it to lunge a second time at her car. When she got home and inspected her blue Plymouth Sundance, she found what looked like claw marks on the back of the trunk. She later showed them to me, but of course it would be hard to prove what made them.

Unlike Endrizzi, Gipson was not willing to characterize what she saw as a werewolf. “I’d say it was a freak of nature, one of God’s mistakes,” said Gipson. But she did think that it sounded like the same thing Endrizzi had seen, and Gipson was not pleased to think it was still out there on those dark nights.

The Sledding Party and Other Reports

Another Spring Prairie–area resident, thirteen-year-old Heather Bowey, also had an encounter of the canid (canine hominid) kind. I interviewed Heather and her mother, Karen, by phone, and Karen told me Heather had seen the creature two years previous when she was ten or eleven, while playing with a small group of friends and cousins. In late December 1990 the children had been sledding near a creek and were on their way home just before dusk when they saw what appeared to be a large dog. Karen remembers her daughter’s fright well.

“She said she thought it was a big dog, until it stood up,” said Karen. “We said what do you mean, stood up?” Although Heather begged her parents to go back with her and see it, no one was inclined to do so. Heather’s description of the creature was chilling. “It had silver-colored fur with brown in it,” she said, “and its face was shaped like a coyote’s. But the back legs were shaped differently. When it stood up, they looked bigger than a dog’s or coyote’s, like they could stand up and jump and stuff. It was looking at me.”

The creature’s aggressive “looking” was something that all of the witnesses had noticed: an unabashed stare that they perceived as unnatural and challenging. It seemed to be what scared people the most.

The animal kept looking at the children while they looked back, until the children sensed something was wrong and began to run. The creature chased them, said Heather, “kind of like a dog would run but with bigger leaps. It got halfway to the house, then turned around and went back into the cornfield.”

Karen Bowey said she thought the children had seen some sort of hybrid, or “mix,” and that Heather was not known for lying or making things up. Young Russell Gest was one of the children with Heather that day, and he attested to seeing the same thing. He was in the same class at school as one of my sons, who said Gest would occasionally talk about it. The other children also agreed with Heather’s story but preferred to keep their identities anonymous.

One note: Heather Bowey was one of the few witnesses I’ve talked to who described the creature’s hair as “silvery” with brown also mixed in. Others have always described it as brown or dark, usually dark brown, and sometimes with a slight mixture of other color. Possibly the low winter sun,

illuminating the landscape just before sunset and glinting off the snow, may have caused the creature's coat to look a different color to Bowey.

As it turned out, Endrizzi, Gipson, and Bowey were not the only ones to have seen something odd. Someone had reported to Marty Boerner, then director of the Lakeland Animal Shelter, that big, strange tracks were seen near Simons Feed Mill on Potter's Road, which is also in the Bray Road vicinity, in 1991.

"They nicknamed it Pottsy," she told me. The man who reported the strange imprints told shelter workers he took a friend and went back to find the tracks again. Both witnessed them a second time. "He had never seen any tracks like that before," said Boerner. "They had very long claw marks and were made just after the first snow this year." Unfortunately, no drawings or casts were made.

The shelter also had a report from an employee of the Elkhorn Burger King, near the center of town, that he had seen a manlike creature running in that vicinity, "and he could not believe how fast it ran and the power it had." The Burger King is located on the same street that leads out to one end of Bray Road.

Of course I asked the shelter officials what they thought this animal could be, and both Boerner and Fredrickson were at a loss to explain it. Boerner noted that a wolf had been spotted near Bloomfield and Genoa City (an area about ten to fifteen miles south of Bray Road) on December 16, just a few weeks previous. "We also had some reports of one near LaGrange, in the Kettle Moraine," she added. (That would prove prophetic.)

Fredrickson summed it up pretty well. "The county's getting stranger and stranger," he told me. And while no one at the shelter could explain what people were seeing, the staff had definitely taken note of the reports and were keeping track as best they could.

The "Kneeling-Roadkill" Sketch

I had plenty to write about. But the story needed art. I used Endrizzi's description and werewolf picture as inspiration and came up with a sketch of a slathering, wolf-headed creature kneeling over a bloody pavement patty. (Endrizzi also made some rough, similar sketches of her own that were later published in *Strange Magazine*.) Of course I put a full moon in

the background, although the witnesses I'd talked to so far weren't really sure if a full moon had been out at the time of their sightings. They were too busy gawking at the creature to check on atmospheric conditions.

In perfect hindfootsight, I see now that I should have called in a cryptozoologist to investigate while the trail was still reasonably warm, but at the time I had no idea what a cryptozoologist was. Now I know that it's someone who studies mysterious, out-of-place, or unknown animals ... say Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster, or even a kangaroo that turns up in a Midwestern subdivision. And yes, there really are people who do this for a living.

At any rate, my story had to be written whether I knew about cryptozoology or not. It would be interesting, I remember thinking as I tapped the keys on my Apple IIC, to see what people would say about this mystery. I still had no comprehension of the size of the story I now had by the tail.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MEDIA TAKE A BITE

THE SUBJECT OF werewolves was not one that I'd given a lot of thought to, I must admit, but I've always had a curiosity about the unexplained. My father used to tell about riding in a pickup truck in Price County and being followed by a strange light. He thought it must have been a UFO. He was a science fiction fan, and we always had paperbacks and magazines filled with stories from other worlds around the house.

In my Lutheran catechism classes, I used to test saintly Reverend Schumacher's patience by asking him why there couldn't be people on other planets. Because, he would tell me, if there were people on other planets, God would have told us about them in the Bible. My reply was that God didn't tell us about cats in the Bible ... they are not mentioned once (unless you count lions) ... and yet they exist. Perhaps the same could be said about werewolves ... or dogmen.

I have read a few books on psychic phenomena, theology, and metaphysics in my day. But I never got around to thinking much about unexplained earthly creatures. Maybe that's why I didn't realize that so many others were interested ... intensely interested ... in such subjects, and why it took me by such surprise when my story began causing a sensation.

Werewolf Hits the Wires

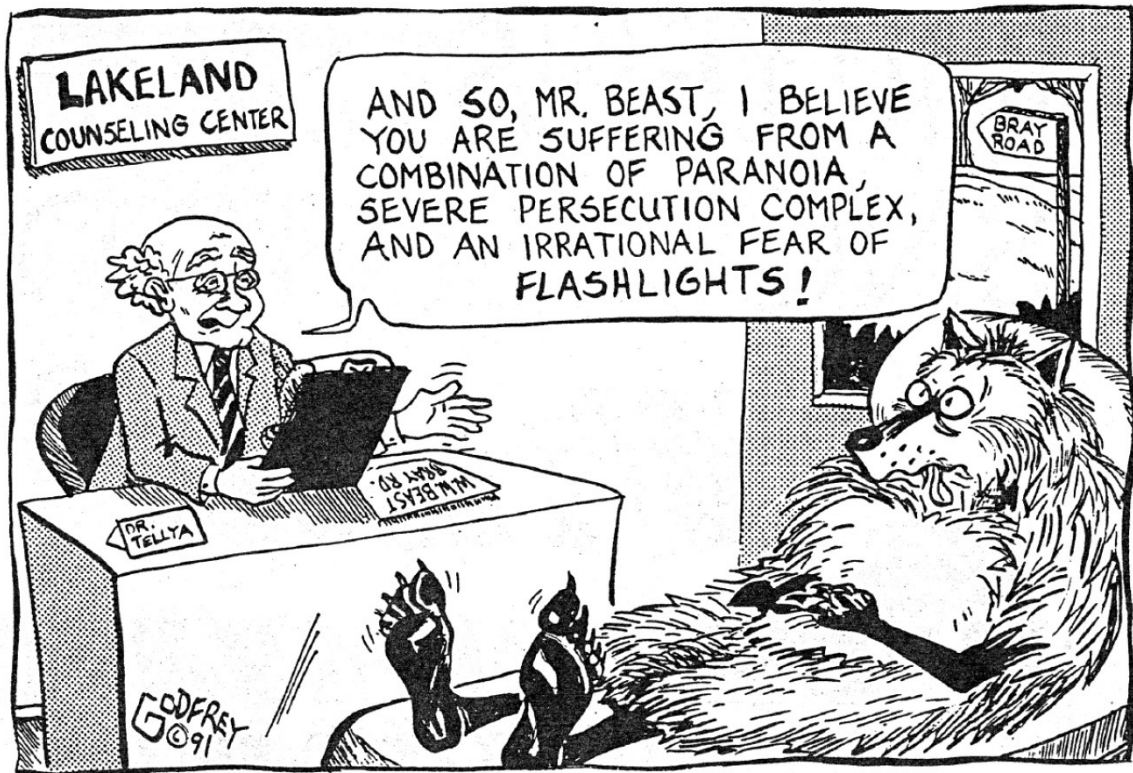
Although it doesn't seem likely that a story in a weekly Wisconsin local paper would spread worldwide, anything can happen in this modern era of communication—especially if the story is about werewolves.



Reader's drawing of the Beast that accompanied a letter to *The Week*.
—courtesy of *The Week*

The Week is and was owned by a conglomerate of papers, one of which is the *Janesville Gazette*, which serves a city of about fifty thousand located some thirty miles west of Elkhorn. One of their reporters wrote a recap of my story, which soon went out on the Associated Press wires. (January was a slow news time for everyone.)

Within weeks, the story had made it from coast to coast. There were four TV stations in Milwaukee at the time, and all of them sent camera crews scurrying to Elkhorn. Although I used false names for the witnesses in my original story, one station tracked down some of them using the same methods as I had. Before long they had agreed to let their identities be known and were appearing on TV, telling their stories for the world. Some later regretted it, but the werecat was out of the bag.



Linda Godfrey/The Week

Author's cartoon of werewolf run ragged by publicity.

Media Madness

The TV stations also came to *The Week* office to find me, and I answered their questions as best I could. An anchor from one Milwaukee station stood in front of my desk and asked me if I thought this was responsible journalism. I think I replied something like, "Well, you are here covering it, aren't you?" That exchange never made the air.

And for the record, I did think it was responsible journalism. We presented the idea of a hairy beast on Bray Road as a local rumor, not fact, but we also had a county-contracted official keeping a folder marked "werewolf," full of unidentified walking animal (UWA) sightings. That really is news. If something out of the ordinary was out there, people should know about it. And the witnesses had a perfect right to their own opinions about what they had seen, and to go public or not as they saw fit.

Several of Milwaukee's morning radio programs called to interview me, and the city's most-listened-to afternoon talk show host, Mark Belling, declared the whole thing a hoax without bothering to investigate. He told his listeners he was sure *The Week* made the whole thing up to sell papers.

If he had checked, he would have discovered that *The Week* was a free newspaper with a set circulation, so having one sensational story would do little to line its pockets.

The Week hadn't even made it the cover story. Appearing on the front page that week was a portrait of a baby, dad, and granddad who were three generations of New Year's babies. And the truth was, not all the paper's advertisers were thrilled in this conservative community to see a story about possible werewolves running around and tackling people's cars. I don't think the paper lost any revenue, but the Beast of Bray Road was not the type of article local businesses coveted.

Besides, the story was a good fit for us because *The Week* specialized in telling the stories of local people, and here we had real people telling about some experiences that were very real to them. I still think it took guts on the part of the witnesses to stand up and do that.

Phone calls started coming in from radio stations in other states, from WGN in Chicago to WBAL in Baltimore. A San Francisco station called and begged me to howl on the air and seemed very disappointed when I didn't.

Even a children's show, Detective Deadly Dudley, from a public radio station in Milwaukee, wanted to talk about the Beast of Bray Road. I agreed, because I'd heard there were Elkhorn children who were scared of this big monster, even though it hadn't hurt anyone. It was a good chance to make that point on the air.

I finally lost track of all the stations that called, but by the time it was over, the werewolf's walk down Bray Road had become the trot heard 'round the world.

Silver Bullet Specials, Illinois Tourists, and Werewolf Cookies

Around Elkhorn, people started getting into the spirit of things. Lakeland Bakery began offering "werewolf cookies," big sugar cookie cutouts dressed in brown frosting, and advertised them on their Wisconsin Street sign. Much to the chagrin of the residents of Bray Road, werewolf "hunters" began prowling the road at night, trespassing on private fields and yards, even staring in windows. Some came with guns. At least one tavern in Illinois sent a busload to Bray Road on a "werewolf tour" and served

“Silver Bullet Specials.” It was a miracle that one of the adventure seekers didn’t accidentally shoot any of the other people also sneaking around out there.



Werewolf cookies from Elkhorn’s Lakeland Bakery.

Someone even made a green-and-white sign that looked like the official highway department’s road signs, and posted it around January 5 on the Bray Road sign just off County Highway NN. It read, “Werewolf Area.” It disappeared within days.

Another prankster made a plywood cutout of a werewolf and placed it in the yard of some Bray Road residents, positioned as if ready to pounce on two deer statues. Wisconsinites can be a mischievous bunch.

Radio stations helped add to the reports of sightings, too. On Milwaukee’s WKTI, a twenty-year-old woman from Elkhorn who said her name was Jennifer called in with a sighting from the previous November. She said she and her boyfriend were driving late at night when something that looked like a wolf but ran on two legs loped across the road in front of their car.

“I know it wasn’t human because it was brown,” said Jennifer. I assume she meant it was covered with brown fur. She didn’t say where she saw it, but again I’m assuming it was in the vicinity of Elkhorn.

I did my best to discourage the throngs of curiosity seekers. Every time I was interviewed, I explained that the sightings hadn’t been made yesterday, that the sightings reported had been only by chance, and that any animal of that size, with a demonstrated ability to be wary and hide itself

when confronted, would probably not just be standing out in the ditches of Bray Road waiting to jump through hoops for carloads of Illinois tourists.

The Walworth County sheriff's department was saying essentially the same thing, issuing warnings about trespassing, and declaring that the creature seen was either a dog or coyote and had already been killed.

Indeed, rumors were flying around the county that the creature was a huge, misbegotten (a) German shepherd, (b) Alaskan husky, or (c) wolf hybrid.

Jon Fredrickson told me that two years previous to the commotion, he had captured a big husky in the Town of Geneva, a few miles from Bray Road, which had to be destroyed because it attacked two people. "It was one of the biggest, meanest dogs I ever had to handle," said Fredrickson. "It was a big goomer" (*The Week*, January 12, 1992). None of these "explanations" had any effect on the mesmerized public.

One Elkhorn bar started offering Silver Bullet Specials and printed T-shirts using my sketch from *The Week*, which was of course copyrighted to the paper at the time. Lawyers of *The Week*'s parent organization quickly nixed this violation, and the bar found a new T-shirt artist.

After this, *The Week* decided that if other people were making money from its story, it might as well too, and started printing their own shirts with my drawing, with the caption "Werewolf of *the Week*." They paid me forty dollars as my share of the T-shirt proceeds, because they used my artwork, and I was happy with the unexpected bonus. That might not sound like much, but anyone working for a small-town weekly newspaper knows this is not a career path paved with gold. But to compensate for the low pay scale, it is the kind of job where a reporter can write about things like werewolves.



Tim Roberts, brother of the author, has fun with a Werewolf of the Week T-shirt and an ornery friend, 1992.

Not that higher pay scales elsewhere were stopping other reporters from writing about werewolves, too.

Other Writings of the Sightings

Milwaukee then had two newspapers, the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, which have since merged into the *Journal-Sentinel*. But it was the *Sentinel* that reported on January 8, 1992, “FUR-IGHT: Back road sightings have several drivers crying wolf.”

Reporter Rick Romell began, “It walks by night along the Walworth County back roads, some sort of hairy, pointy-eared, man-sized ... *thing*.” Romell talked to some of the Brays who live on Bray Road. He heard from thirty-five-year resident Scott Bray that seven or eight people had shined spotlights near his house in just one evening. Bray added he had never seen anything like what was being reported (although he did later admit to a strange incident with a creature near a rock pile; see Chapter 5). Scott Bray’s aunt and uncle, Bernice and Howard Bray, were also quoted in the article as saying they hadn’t seen anything, either.

Romell talked to Walworth County sheriff’s deputy Lt. Gerald Watson, who offered up the tortured explanation that people had seen “a coyote with a deformed leg that sticks out in a way that it looks as if the animal is standing.” Who says law enforcement officers aren’t creative?

A few days later, in its edition of Sunday, January 12, the *Milwaukee Journal* included a short piece titled, “Werewolf Stories Draw Out the Wary.” It began, “The Werewolf of Walworth County probably is more

mistake than monster. But it sure has the folks in Elkhorn talking.” They noted that I had begun my investigation “with a healthy dose of skepticism,” and also included my quote that the witnesses “were not the type of people who were trying to get attention, not the sort who usually make a fuss.”

Even *The Week*’s food writer, Don Turnbull, couldn’t resist cooking up something wolfish. In his recipe column on January 26, right after his version of a Punjabi entree called Maahn Rajma, he featured a dish he called “Werewolf ala Don.” It called for a three hundred-pound werewolf—no more than two hundred years old—silver bullets, and a full moon. The directions started with, “First, find your werewolf.” He admitted that this part was a big “snag” in the development of his recipe, which would have to be put on hold until this requirement was met.

The story began to attract letters from the public, too, often with their own opinions on the phenomenon. On January 26, 1992, *The Week* ran a long, anonymous letter with accompanying cartoony illustration of a wolfish face. The letter recited scientific experiments with genetic splicing, claiming, “a mouse with the head a chicken [*sic*] has already been produced under laboratory conditions.” It went on, avowing that, “Our government, in its Great Wisdom, has authorized the creation of numerous monstrosities from a chicken-headed mouse to Viet Nam and Hiroshima. Where, then, will it end? Why not a werewolf? Why else has it not been caught or given anyone the chance to photograph it? Like its mysterious counterpart, Bigfoot, could it be the product of genetic tampering?” I had wondered when the government conspiracy to create genetically engineered wolfmen would finally be revealed.

The mysterious letter writer continued, “I know what the beast of Bray Road is. I know its secret. I know that more small pets of warmblooded creatures will vanish from the area because people refuse to believe. They have forgotten the Old Ways and don’t want to know about the danger of the new.”

No more was heard from this writer. If he did indeed know what the Beast was, aside from his hints that Elkhorn was the victim of a government-sponsored mutant program, we never found out.

Another writer tweaked my quote in the Milwaukee Journal in which I said, “I’m a Lutheran, and Lutherans don’t believe in werewolves.” Now, that doesn’t mean I don’t believe in a spiritual world ... I do indeed. But

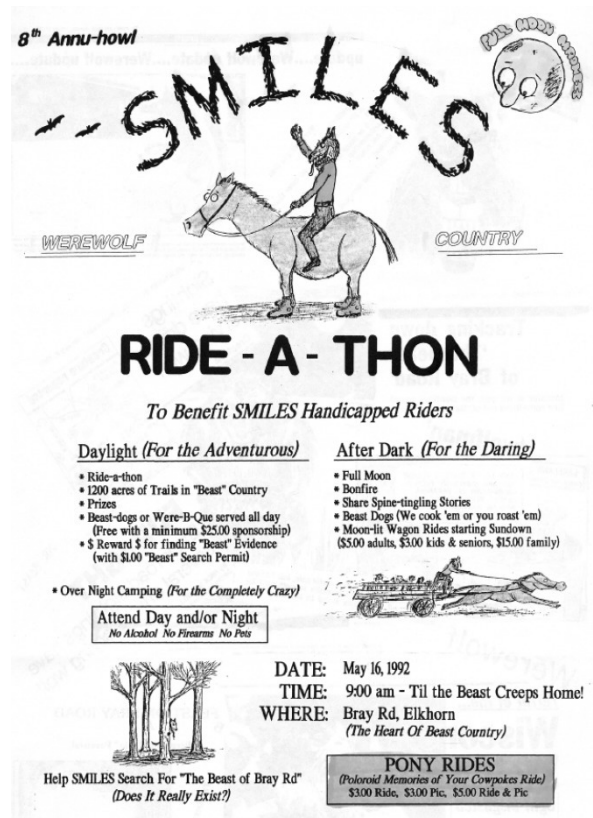
this person sent me a photocopy of page 291 of *The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary* by Ambrose Bierce. On this page was a definition of “werewolf,” which included this anecdote:

Some Bavarian peasants having caught a wolf one evening, tied it to a post by the tail and went to bed. The next morning nothing was there! Greatly perplexed, they consulted the local priest, who told them that their captive was undoubtedly a werewolf and had resumed its human form during the night. “The next time that you take a wolf,” the good man said, “see that you chain it by the leg, and in the morning you will find a Lutheran.”

I actually thought that was pretty funny.

AWerewolf in The Sun

In February 1992 the story, having run the gamut of the mainstream press, finally hit the tabloids. *The Sun*, a publication headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida, ran “Wisconsin Wolfman” as a frontpage story, right under “One-Eyed Baby.” Inside, the lurid text proclaimed, “Ugh! Disgusted eyewitnesses watch him eat bloody roadkill. The flesh-eating beast of Bray Road has been terrorizing residents of a rural town for the last few years and keeping them locked in their homes after nightfall.”



Publicity handout for the SMILES Ride-a-Thon.

The piece was supposedly written by a “May Turner.” It haphazardly borrowed the fake first names I’d used in my first story for Lori En-drizzi and Doris Gipson, “Barbara” and “Pat,” and added new, fake last names to arrive at Barbara Holt and Pat Braxton as the names of the witnesses. It did get the few other names right.

The best part was the photograph, however. Someone in Hollywood werewolf makeup stood in the shadows, holding a furry thing in its great claws, mouth gaping and giant fangs gleaming as it prepared to chomp. No photo credit was given.

The fervor hadn’t died down by spring. In May 1992, a benefit was held on Bray Road for a local nonprofit organization called SMILES, which provides equestrian experiences for disabled children. In their flyer, they called it the “Eighth Annu-howl.” It ran from 9:00 A.M. “until the Beast creeps home,” and asked participants to “help SMILES search for the Beast of Bray Road. Does it really exist?” Events included twelve hundred acres of trail riding in “Beast Country,” “Beast-Dogs or Were-B-Que served all

day,” a cash reward for finding “Beast” evidence, and overnight camping “for the completely crazy.”

In June, *Wisconsin Trails* magazine featured a story written by Tom Davis, entitled “Werewolves of Walworth” and leading off with the lyrics of the rock song “Werewolves of London” by Warren Zevon, slightly amended to fit the new title: “You’d better stay away from him, He’ll rip your lungs out, Jim. Huh! I’d like to meet his tailor.”

Looking back at various publications from that time, I now see that my own opinions about the nature of the Beast evolved as I was interviewed time and again.

I’ve always leaned toward the hybrid wolf theory. When talking to Davis for the *Wisconsin Trails* article, however, I had temporarily gravitated to the “bear” theory, which Davis supported by noting that a bear had been sighted in Portage not long before that. (Bears are not unknown in these parts. In 2002 one was sighted in Madison, only an hour away from Walworth County as the human drives.)

But then again, I’m not one of those who actually saw the Beast of Bray Road. I put a lot of faith in the descriptions of those who did see it, because not only have most of them been reluctant to tell their stories, they also took the very real risk of ridicule. Imagine being a junior high school student who suddenly finds herself with the nickname, “werewolf girl.” And Doris Gipson endured similar treatment at the high school from many of her classmates.

I have no doubt there are many stories about this creature that were not told and never will be, because the bearers of those stories observed what happened to others. And yet, amazingly, witnesses continued to come forward.

CHAPTER THREE

MORE SIGHTINGS

KNOWING THAT SOMEONE else has seen the same thing seems to help open the floodgates. In that way, the radio and television shows that broadcast the story of the sightings played a very big part in teasing out the next wave of stories.

A Beast on a Burial Mound

As Joe Schackelman watched the news in his Racine, Wisconsin, home one evening, his eyes popped when he saw my sketch of the werewolf and then listened to the Bray Road witnesses. He later told me that every hair on his body stood up. Schackelman, a nonfiction author and publications consultant who was then editor of *The Labor Paper*, Kenosha, Wisconsin had guarded a secret of his own for decades, but he called me almost immediately after seeing the TV news.

Back in 1958, said Schackelman, his father wanted to confide in him about something extraordinary that had happened years earlier in 1936, while the elder Schackelman was working as a night watchman at a Catholic convent called St. Coletta.

The convent, about two miles east of Jefferson, Wisconsin, is where Rosemary Kennedy, of the famous Kennedy clan, was housed after her father had her lobotomized for mild retardation in 1941 at the age of twenty-three.

After telling me his story, Joe Schackelman published the whole tale in the *Racine Labor* paper on February 19, 1992. My account is taken from a personal interview I had with him that month and from his own written version based on his notes.



Hairy hand, similar to the one Tom Brichta saw sticking out from the darkness.

Joe's father, Mark Schackelman, encountered a strange creature on the St. Colletta's grounds at midnight on two separate nights. The first night, he found the creature kneeling atop a Native American burial mound. The strange, upright being appeared to be clawing the ground but fled when the watchman approached.

Schackelman noted in his story how similar both the kneeling pose and the long claws were to Lori Endrizzi's description. His father went back to the mound the next day to look for evidence, and he saw "raking" marks in the earth that looked to have been made by three claws.

The elder Schackelman told his son the thumb and little finger of the creature's hands appeared to be "shriveled," or noticeably shorter than the middle three fingers. The creature may also have tended to fold its thumb and little finger inward the way a human would do when making a "clawing" motion. (In the spring-summer 1993 issue of *Strange Magazine*, my article, *Bray Road Beast Update*, described the shriveled appendages as the thumb and forefinger, but the word *forefinger* was in error, I discovered in a February 2003 interview with Schackelman.)

Mark Schackelman must have been a brave man, because he went back to the mound the next night at midnight, armed with a flashlight that he could wield like a club, and sure enough, there the creature was, scratching

at the same earth mound. This time, instead of running away, it stood up and faced Schackelman, who estimated it stood over six feet tall.

He later told his son it was “covered with dark or black hair, gave off a bad, bad odor ... like long-dead meat ... eyes that looked right into me, and it made a sound. It was a three-syllable growl, low and mean, something like ‘gadarrah’ with the accent on the second syllable.” As I quoted Schackelman in *Strange*, “It seemed to have a ‘neo-human’ voice,” he said, “and it made eye contact.”

Mark Schackelman was no weakling; he had been a heavyweight boxer. But he confessed to his son that the hair on his neck stood up and he felt certain the creature had it in its power to kill him if it so desired. As they stood locked in a terrifying stare-down, the creature growled at Schackelman.

He told his son, “Then I did the only thing I could do, I prayed to God to save me ... and it turned and slowly walked away. It looked like it sneared [*sic*] at me. For a long time I stood there, that bad smell hung in the air and then I said another prayer of thankfulness. I never saw that thing again or anything even like it.”

Mark Schackelman told only his wife what he had seen, and he swore her to secrecy. Years later he also confided in his son, Joe, who made a sketch according to his father’s description (see illustration).

It shows a well-muscled humanoid form with three long claws on feet and hands and a head with a pronounced forward-pointing muzzle, prominent fangs, and pointed ears near the top of the head. The head, at least, appears more canid than apelike to me. But that’s open to interpretation. The body is covered with long, scraggly fur. No tail is seen. The hands droop downward as if ready to claw something.

Schackelman and his father did have subsequent conversations about the creature, and Joe remembers asking Mark whether he thought the creature was an animal or supernatural. He quoted his father’s answer as, “That damn thing came straight out of hell.”

“He smiled then,” continued Schackelman, “and added, ‘Maybe my prayer sent it back to hell.’ And then his smile faded and he said, ‘I bet it didn’t stay there.’” Perhaps it didn’t.

Was there a religious meaning to Mark Schackelman’s frightening experience? As mentioned earlier, there has been an ongoing debate about whether the Beast of Bray Road and similar creatures are of the “spirit

world”—other-dimensional—or whether they are an earthly, mutated, or undiscovered species of “natural” animal.

Animals called “hellhounds” are found in ancient European literature. Bob Trubshaw published an article on the Web site The Edge called “Black Dogs and Guardians of the Corpse Ways.” In a Norse saga called, *The Road to Hel*, [sic], said Trubshaw, “we are told that dog guardians are one of several characteristic features of this journey.”

Trubshaw also calls to mind the growling “gadarrah” spoken by the St. Colletta’s creature when he says, “the growl of the hellhound ... is a halfway station between articulate speech and silence. It is a speech filled with emotion and power, but utterly lacking in reason.... ”

He also noted, “Few myths have such world-wide parallels. We are left with the distinct impression that dogs have been protecting the ways to the Otherworld back into the origins of human beliefs.”

I guess a burial mound could be seen as a way to the Otherworld.

There is another aspect to the creature’s utterance. I’m no biblical scholar, but I am familiar with the Bible, and it occurred to me that “Gadara” is near the place in ancient Judea where Jesus exorcised a demon-possessed man “coming from the tombs,” causing his demons to go into a herd of pigs which then threw themselves down an embankment into the Sea of Galilee. (Loren Coleman also pointed out the same biblical significance of the word *Gadara* in his 2002 book *Mothman and Other Curious Encounters*.)

Versions in the other gospels vary a bit, but they all agree the demoniac had been living in the hillside caves that served as tombs. These caves were often inhabited by the very poor, according to Bible references. It is clear, however, that this man was not simply poverty-stricken.

The apostles describe him as extraordinarily strong. “No one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet.... Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones” (Mark 5:3–5).

The man was undoubtedly a horrible, unkempt sight, but once healed, he was able to return to town and resume life as a normal man. Furthermore, he recognized Jesus as “Son of the Most High God,” and told Jesus that his name was “Legion,” suggesting that more than one demon had inhabited him.

It seems unlikely, therefore, that the exorcised Gadarene was in fact the same type of creature seen by Mark Schackelman. Still, it is interesting that the one “word” the creature uttered would be the name of the town where Jesus cast out demons and that both incidents were connected with burial places.

And, giving credit to the witness’ own observations, Schackelman *felt* the creature he saw was “straight out of hell.” A hellhound, with the power of speech ... could it get any more eerie?

My family once had a talking Chihuahua that my brothers trained to say, “hamburger.” He didn’t look like a hellhound, but a friend of mine was sure he had a demon in him and would not be in the same room with him.



Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bushman.

Terror, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

Why Did the Werewolf Cross the Road?

To Get to His Other Hide

Another reaction to the media broadcasts came in the form of a letter addressed to me at *The Week*, from a Mrs. Robert Bushman of St. Nazianz, several hours north of our area. Robert Bushman also said he felt his hair rise ... this creature would make a helpful assistant in a barbershop ... and so did mine when I read Bushman’s letter. The full version has not been printed before. It read:

Dear Linda Godfrey,

When our local radio station picked up your story from the *Milwaukee Sentinel* of 1-8-92, a *light* went on in my head. That explained the unexplained! Sort of!

Just to let you (and others who make light of sightings of the creature) know that there is something running around in your area. Something that is very difficult to describe. Our son is a county deputy in your area and he urged me to contact you.

I am fifty-four years old, my husband is sixty-two, his mother is in a nursing home in Rockford, Illinois so we travel through your area quite often to visit her. On November 30, 1991 about ten a.m. we left I-43 at Elkhorn and traveled Hwy. 11 to Delavan. Out in a wide open field, on a bright, sunny day, my husband saw what, at first, he thought was a deer being chased by a hunter. As he got nearer to it and it crossed the highway in front of us at a *high rate of speed* he realized it *was not a deer!* By the time I looked in the right direction it was gone.

He turned the car around and we looked for it but no luck. When he tried to describe it to me he couldn't. He said it was too large to be a wolf, it had a terribly unkempt look to its fur, wild, not normal. It was black, scraggly looking like no animal he has ever seen, was the best he could describe it. It was running on *all fours* when he saw it. He said that he couldn't imagine it running upright, it could never get the kind of speed that he saw, on two legs.

After that sighting, he never talked about it much, just took it as *something* and forgot about it until this, he feels better that others have seen it.

It wasn't Bray Road and it wasn't at night but it WAS. If people are laughing it off as though there is nothing, they are wrong. It is probably an animal that is just too lg [large] for its normal species, like the human race has deviations but it did make my husband's hair stand up on his arms. He was very impressed.

From now on when we travel to Rockford we will certainly keep an eye out for your creature.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Robert F. Bushman, St. Nazianz, WI.

Unfortunately, Bushman did not get a good enough look at the creature's head to describe ears or muzzle shape. The sighting occurred in daylight, so he was at least able to see its size and fur. In a recent phone interview with Bushman, he said that the animal's position, with its front legs completely forward and back legs straight out back as it ran "flat out," reminded him of the running posture of an old "panther" nightlight that used to sit on his TV. However he felt sure this was not a panther; it was too big for that and its fur was longer and wilder. (See Chapter 14 for more about black panthers.)

He estimated its size to be about that of a calf. He said it was not quite big or "chubby" enough to be a bear; its physique was "sleeker" than a bear's. He also said it was bigger than a wolf. "I guess it maybe could have been a really large dog," said Bushman. He estimates his vehicle was about one hundred feet away from the animal at the time he saw it. "I know what I saw and I knew what it looked like," said Bushman. "It was moving!"

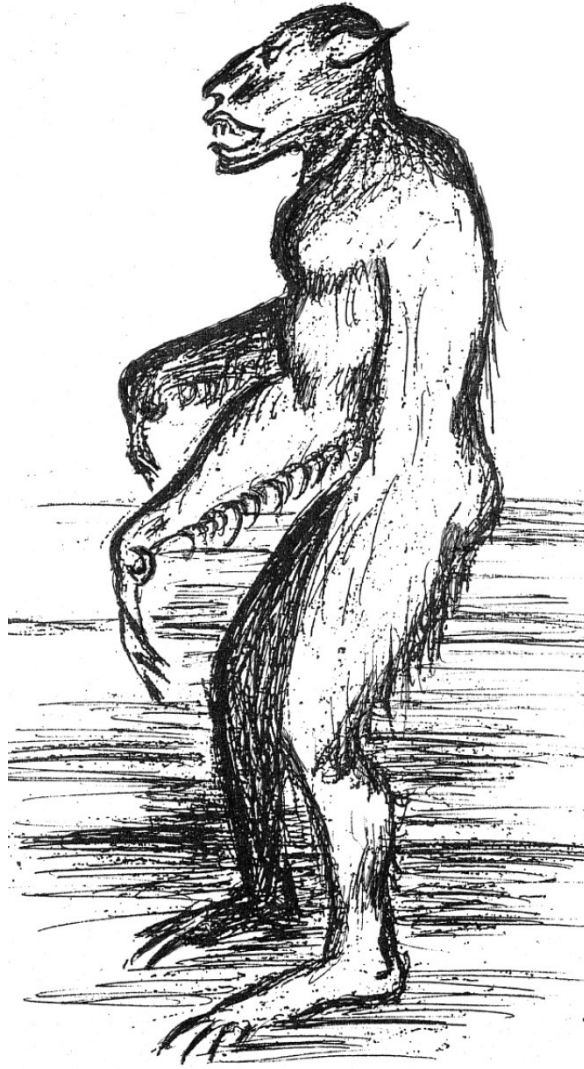
An almost identical sighting happened five years later to someone who had never heard of the Bushman incident. Glenn North, forty-five-year-old engineer and resident of Waterford, was on his way to Whitewater with his wife one dark evening in early February, traveling west on Highway 12 just past the LaGrange intersection.

"It was a brutally cold night, with record-breaking cold, something like thirty-six degrees below zero," North told me. "And it was pitch dark. We were at the flat plateau between LaGrange and where Highway 12 changes to a three-lane; you go down a valley then up to the top of a hill, and suddenly coming from the north, to my right, a creature came out of the ditch right in front of my pickup truck."

North said he was so close to the thing that he was sure he was going to hit it, and he estimated his truck's speed at fifty-five to sixty miles an hour. "It was so close that as it ran in front of the truck, it completely disappeared from view in front of the hood," he said. "But then, it completely cleared the vehicle, which amazed me. I'd like to say it had to be going thirty to forty miles an hour."

Whatever it was did not slow down but kept going across the highway. North saw it run down through the ditch on the other side and somehow either “ran through or over a fence,” keeping its speed the whole time.

Although North had a fast look, there was enough glare from his headlights to get a good impression of its appearance, he said. As it ran, North noted that its body formed a straight line from nose to tail. “It had a sharp, long nose,” he said, “and incredibly long, dark, shaggy but not clumpy fur, which was flowing freely in the breeze, not stiff. I also had the impression it was wide in the body, thick through the shoulders and hips. In size, it was good-sized like the length of a wolf but much taller, maybe twice as tall as a wolf, and based on speed it had very long legs.” Its ears, said North, were pointed and two to three inches long, but were laid flat back as it ran.



“Gadarrah” creature seen by Mark Schackelman at Saint Colletta’s, sketched by Joe Schackelman. –courtesy of Joe Schackelman

“Out there on a night like that at that speed, it was not somebody’s farm dog, it was an exotic animal,” North continued. “The thing that really impressed me was the incredible power and sense of purpose it had. It took my breath away. I was a little bit awestruck by the thing.”

North said he felt the animal had been living in the wild. Although North said he’s had a few isolated but intense spiritual experiences in his life, he did not feel that there was an element of the supernatural in this incident. “I think about it every now and then,” he said, “but I don’t expect to see it again.”

Man Says It's Bigfoot!

Another high-speed jaywalker had been observed years earlier, in July 1964, by a rural Delavan man, on the other side of Delavan. Stories about this sighting by writer Jay Rath had appeared in the *Capital Times* in October, 1984, and the *Milwaukee Journal* September 5, 1985.

The man is positive that what he saw was Bigfoot (as most people generically refer to tall, hairy, humanlike creatures, and as I will also do in this book for expediency), and not a wolfman, but I include his story because of its proximity to the Bray Road sightings and because many people have asked whether the Bray Road Beast could actually be Bigfoot. I interviewed the man, who does not wish his name to be used, by phone and at his home, recording his tale on video as well.

In a video recording made in January, 1993, he said, "It was July of 1964, approximately between twelve midnight and one a.m., I was driving home from where I worked at the Admiral Corporation in Harvard, Illinois, about twenty-one miles from my home."

The man was peeling down his home stretch of highway and had just turned west onto Richmond Townline Road from Hwy. 89, when "about seventy-five yards after turning left at the corner I picked up a big, hairy creature. I first noticed him on the north side of the road in a cornfield. He jumped a four and a half-foot fence, ran across the road and jumped the fence on the other side. Estimated height, seven to eight feet. Estimated weight, four hundred to five hundred pounds."

"It was running on two legs," he continued, "swinging its arms, and the closest thing it looked like was a large human being. Scared the devil right out of me. It showed no fear, didn't stop, didn't waver. I think it had to be intelligent because it was running seventy-five to one hundred yards off the main highway, parallel with the highway. What would a human being be doing between midnight and one a.m. out in a cornfield, and only by chance someone would see it? For a human to jump a four and a half-foot fence at that weight, he'd roll over it. He wouldn't jump it."

The man also reported that the creature was covered with dark hair from head to toe. He went back the next day to look for tracks but the ground was too hard. I interviewed him several times and, like the creature he saw, he never wavered.

In a phone interview in December, 1992, the man also noted that the creature leaned forward as he ran, and that he didn't see a tail on it. In the

darkness, he couldn't see a snout or ears. "The head was round, not oblong," he added. "It had long arms. It was too big to be human. And no, I had not been drinking. I know what I saw."

Of course, we don't know if what this man saw and what Bushman saw were the same thing. The Delavan man saw an upright runner; Bushman saw something on four legs that sounds smaller than a Bigfoot-type creature. The Delavan man describes something that looked humanoid, while Bushman leans toward a quadruped. And even though the Bushman and Delavan sightings were separated by 27 years, there were other sightings around Walworth and Jefferson Counties that support both types of descriptions.

La Beast of LaGrange

One of the most interesting sightings, partly because there were two people who simultaneously observed the creature, comes from a husband and wife who live in the area of LaGrange, near the intersections of Highways 12 and H at the northern edge of Walworth County. "I know something is out there," said the wife in a recent, follow-up phone interview. "How could I forget it?"

The wife, who has worked for many years as manager of a local service business, and her husband, a carpenter-turned-logger, still do not wish their names revealed, so I'll call them Mary and Bill. They were returning to their home on the edge of the Kettle Moraine State Forest one night in early August 1990, from Palmyra, a few miles north of their home.

"About two miles north of the intersection [of H and 12] there was some snow fencing," said Mary in an interview in March of 1993, "and we both saw something by it at the same time. It had glowing eyes, and the hair stood up on the backs of our necks. It was large, seven or eight feet tall; the eyes were spread quite far apart and were a glowing, gold color. We couldn't see any fur; it was back in the trees so we mostly saw the silhouette.

"The eyes were spread too far apart to be a cow. Anyway there are no cows there, and the eyes were also too far off the ground. It was right on the edge of the woods; the headlights shined through the fence on it; it was fifteen or twenty yards or more away.

“I would have to say it was standing up,” she added. “It was at least seven feet tall. It was taller than I am. Bill is always out in the woods and he has never seen anything unusual like this, no tracks or anything.”

The couple returned home, and Mary said they were “kidding each other” about not letting their dog out. They had a ninety-pound Doberman at the time, she said, and they did let it out. “He walked outside about ten feet, smelled the air, and hightailed it back inside,” said Mary. They later called a local Department of Natural Resources (DNR) agent to ask whether there had been any other sightings but received a negative response.

The Bluff Man and the Eddy

Interestingly, Mary was able to relate what she and her husband saw to tales she had heard growing up in the area. “I grew up in LaGrange and around Bluff Road,” she said. “They told us stories of the Bluff Man in the early seventies; it was some creature running around and killing game. It was supposed to be big, like a wild man. College students camping out there would come across it.” Bluff Road also borders the Kettle Moraine State Forest.

This reminded me of a story from another person I know, Patty Robertson, who grew up about ten miles east of LaGrange in East Troy. In about the same time frame as the BluffMan, during the sixties and seventies, there were scary stories bandied around East Troy about something called “the Eddy” (which sounds very much like “the Yeti,” another word for Bigfoot or Sasquatch). It was supposedly seen most often by teenagers out parking in secluded country areas, which would sound suspiciously like urban legend if the other sightings are not taken into consideration.

The Horse Slasher

Yet another compelling sighting happened in this general area. Eight years after the rural Delavan sighting, in 1972, DNR agent David Gjetson received a startling phone call from a rural Ft. Atkinson woman who lived about two miles from the St. Coletta grounds. The frightened woman called to say that she had seen a “large, apelike creature” walking in her farmyard. Gjetson drove out to investigate but didn’t find any trace of the creature. Two weeks later, the woman called again, terrified. This time, the beast

walked up to her front porch, rattled the screen door, and left slash marks seven feet above the ground. It proceeded to her horse shed and put a thirty-inch gash in the horse's neck and then left, tramping through the woman's garden and leaving foot-long tracks.



Tom Brichta in the cornfield off Highway 106, where he spotted the creature.

I was not able to learn the woman's identity but did locate and interview David Gjetson by phone. He remembered the incident well and had no official explanation but also said he was convinced of the woman's sincerity at the time. Again, it sounds more like a Bigfoot sighting than a wolfman or dogman, but I include it because there was no definite description of the head and because it sounds like a later sighting in that vicinity which was described as having a doggish or wolflike head.

Tom Brichta and Friends: Teenage Werewolf Spotters

As often has happened with many of the witness reports, my first call about this next case was not from the witness himself but from a concerned

relative who thought the incident should be reported. In this case, the relative was the mother of the witness, a seventeen-year-old high Palmyra-Eagle High School student named Tom Brichta.

Brichta's mother told me the family had lived in a haunted house in Milwaukee, "so we don't close our minds to strange things." And whatever Brichta had seen that night was certainly a strange thing. "He was so frightened," she said. "And he's about six foot five. He's not a coward."

Brichta and a friend named Chris Maxwell from Illinois had gone to a wedding reception in Genesee Depot that August night in 1992. Maxwell was staying at Jellystone Campground near Ft. Atkinson, and Brichta was driving him there. There was a thick fog on the road, so when Brichta hit something, he wasn't sure what it was. "He thought he hit a mailbox so he backed up," said Brichta's mother. That's when he realized it was no mailbox.

"He described it to me as big and hairy," she said, "and that it was walking and 'reaching out.' He had the car window open and said there was a 'horrible odor.'" He also told his mother it reminded him of the Bray Road Beast. And it was not a bear, he insisted. "We have a cabin up north," she said, "so we've seen bears often. They've seen wildcats, coyotes, wolves." Her son would have recognized any of these animals, she was sure.

On his way back home, Brichta saw two patrol officers stopped along Highway 106, and he talked to them about it. He also called in to the sheriff's department when he got home and reported what he had seen to a Lt. Lenz, a patrol lieutenant with the Jefferson County sheriff's department. I was able to verify this with Lt. Lenz, who told me that on that night, there had been a truck accident at Highway 106 and County Highway Z. "Thirty minutes later," said Lenz, "someone called in saying they saw a large object in the ditch at 106 and N and thought it looked like a bear. A squad was dispatched and saw nothing. The two incidents were seven miles apart."

Brichta still insisted that what he had seen was not a bear; that was just the closest thing he could think of when describing what he saw. And he did agree to talk with me himself, by phone and at his home.

Brichta was a very self-confident young man and seemed to have conquered his fear by the time of the interviews. He didn't mention thinking he'd hit a mailbox but instead said he saw what appeared to be an enormous hand sticking out, reaching toward his car in the fog. He slowed down and swerved a little to avoid it. "It was large; its lower chest or belly was at the

top of my car. It was whitish-gray with black streaks in it, and it was hairy,” reported Brichta on his video interview. (Like Heather Bowey, but unlike most other witnesses, he perceived the color as primarily lighter hued.)

“I saw just a faint shadow of actually how big it was,” said Brichta. “I didn’t get any facial details, but the lower part of the body I can describe to a T. It had large legs. The feet ... were a little fuzzy, I can’t describe them as well as I can describe the arm that was reaching for my car. The fingers were either pointed or had quite the nails on them. The arm was long and kind of odd-shaped. It had gotten a piece of pinstriping off my car which I seen later. There was a funny odor for about a mile before we’d seen it, like roadkill, skunk; it diminished, and right before we got on top of it the scent had filled the car.” He added, “I had nothing to drink that night so I know it was not anything of my imagination.”

Brichta showed me his car and pointed to an area where the white pinstriping had been scratched away in several places. “The ‘whatever’ had scratched it at an angle,” he said. There was no clearly identifiable scratch visible, but Brichta explained that it had disappeared due to wear on his car and the loss of additional pinstriping since the incident.

Brichta’s sighting bore quite a bit of resemblance to the Doris Gipson sighting, and Brichta mentioned several times that he had heard about the “Beast of Bray Road,” so he had probably read about Gipson. Like Brichta, Gipson was driving at night, thought she might have hit something, and received a scratch on her car. However, Gipson got out of her car and Brichta did not. Gipson’s creature chased her car, and she had a good look at it, including the head, which she described as doglike. Brichta did not see the head ... until the second time!

As far as I know, Brichta is the only witness besides Gipson who claims to have seen the creature twice. Brichta’s second encounter was two months later, in October.

Brichta says he was driving along the same highway at dusk, this time with his friend Scott Freimund in the car. Both teens saw the creature walking upright alongside a cornfield on the north side of the road, about twenty feet from the road. “Its head and upper shoulders extended above the cornfield,” said Brichta on the videotape. The corn was about six feet high at the time. “It hadn’t noticed us, then it looked at the car and looked at me and gave this little snicker like it was challenging us. We were scared. We

were listening to the *Geraldo* show, which was on at the time. Its legs were like those of a dog, the thighs were muscular and very large. It was huge.”

Brichta also said in a phone interview that the way the creature was strolling along reminded him “of a person window-shopping.”

Brichta and Freimund both described the creature as having dark, shaggy hair (although Brichta said it was whitish-gray the first time). The creature turned to enter the cornfield, lifting its leg to step over something, and Brichta said he did not remember seeing a tail. Freimund was also interviewed on video and agreed with Brichta on the details.

A day or two before this second sighting was made, Brichta was informed by phone that a producer from Los Angeles interested in making a movie was in the area (see Chapter 4). It was quite a surprise when Brichta called then to say that he and Freimund had just sighted the creature. The producer and I hopped in my car and met Brichta and Freimund who drove us to the site where they had seen the animal a few hours earlier. It was dark by then, but we took flashlights and walked down into the ditch and up an incline where Brichta said the creature had been. At the point where Brichta said it had walked into the cornfield was a tufted hillock of grass that something with long legs could have stepped over. There was a circular matted area, a single ear of corn dangling on its edge. It could have been a deer bed, although the deer probably wasn't there long or it would have eaten the corn. And the area was large enough to hold several deer. The ground was too dry and hard for tracks.

Interestingly, nest-type depressions in grass are said to be “typical of Great Lakes area Bigfoot,” according to Jay Rath, author of *I-Files: True Reports of Unexplained Phenomena in Illinois*. And although Brichta described the head of what he saw as doglike, it certainly had the height and body of a Bigfoot.

Was this second sighting believable? It does seem coincidental that the same person would chance upon the creature a second time just when he'd learned a Hollywood producer was in town. Short of a lie detector test or shot of truth serum, neither of which I've ever asked any witnesses to undergo, there is no way to know. Brichta has stuck to his story and later appeared on two national TV shows. His is definitely one of the most detailed stories, at any rate.

Taken all together, this group of sightings added considerably to the growing body of werelore and expanded its territory to northern Walworth

and southern Jefferson Counties. At least it took the heat off the residents of Bray Road for a while. And it showed that if this *was* the same creature everyone was seeing, it was both mobile and remarkably long-lived.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WEREWOLF GETS STAR TREATMENT

BY THE FALL OF 1992, I expected public interest in the creature would plummet. But even before the second Brichta sighting, media attention was maintaining a steady altitude ... and climbing.

Beast Flies High in *Spirit* Magazine

In late summer, *Spirit*, the in-flight magazine of Southwest Airlines, sent Texas writer Dan Morrison all the way to Elkhorn to check out the Beast of Bray Road for himself. “Armed only with a silver bullet and a bucket of chicken, our writer embarks on a hair-raising quest for a modern-day werewolf,” read the headline when the article appeared, along with an illustration designed to look like a jazzy B-movie poster. To his credit, Morrison not only took the time to interview the witnesses for himself, he actually bit the silver bullet and bravely walked Bray Road alone at midnight.

Morrison also admitted his own prejudice. “I do not believe that supernatural beings exist,” he declared. His guess was that people had been seeing a wolf. And as it turned out, he spotted neither wolf nor wolfman on his spooky trek. But then, as I’ve said before, I don’t know anyone who has gone out looking for the Beast intentionally who has actually managed to see it.

Morrison was staying in nearby Delavan, where he was quite taken with the town’s history as a circus capital of America. As he noted, twenty-six circuses once made Delavan their winter headquarters, and at the time of Morrison’s visit, Delavan also housed the Clown Hall of Fame and Research Center. Morrison made several very funny remarks comparing the

scariness of clowns and werewolves (no offense to either). He also quoted Lori Endrizzi as telling him, “I’m not saying it is a werewolf. I’m just saying it has human features, shoulders and arms and hands.”

Morrison next examined the alleged werewolf scratches in Doris Gipson’s blue Sundance. Like me, he seemed to think the origin of the scratches was not provable. But Gipson minced no words in convincing him she was telling the truth. “Look, I don’t get anything from this,” she told Morrison. “In fact, my life has been a living hell since the article came out.”

Sergeant Roger Farnsworth of the Walworth County sheriff’s department was on Morrison’s list, too. Farnsworth told Morrison that the reports of a large, dead farm dog that was supposed to be the true Beast of Bray Road did not officially come from his department and that the Walworth County sheriff’s department was not responsible for the report.

That was surprising to me because the department had said repeatedly, in media outlets such as the Milwaukee Journal, Milwaukee Sentinel, and many radio and TV shows, that the Beast of Bray Road was only a large dog or deformed coyote and it had already been killed. Meaning, everybody please go home and shut up about this already.

And Morrison was nothing if not thorough. After I told him about the reader who suggested leaving a freshly killed chicken alongside the road as bait, then waiting to see if it was gone in the morning, Morrison felt duty bound to try.

His chicken wasn’t exactly freshly killed. No one really knows how long chicken from “the Colonel” has been frozen before it makes its crispy-coated way into the cardboard bucket. And Morrison confessed that he taste-tested quite a bit of the bucket’s contents before leaving it along the roadway and then retreating to his car.

I also give Morrison credit for staying in his car the whole night before discovering at the break of a gray dawn that the chicken had indeed disappeared! He had heard nothing, but then he was asleep, and anything from a raccoon to another hungry Bray Road Beast hunter could have found the bucket and devoured its contents.

It was an extremely well-written and entertaining article, but it had repercussions beyond its face value. Morrison’s article would eventually turn out to be the Beast of Bray Road’s Hollywood connection.

Hollywood Calling

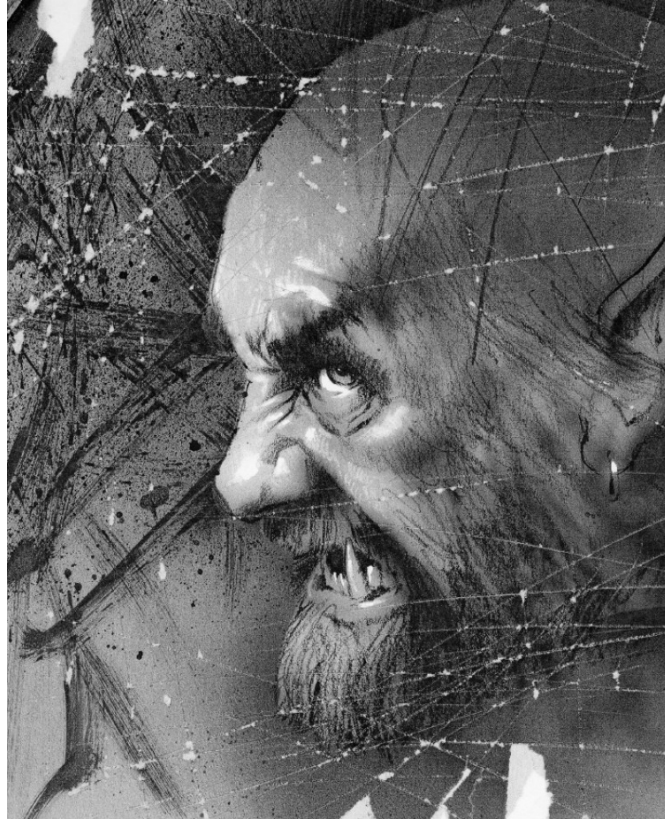
The article appeared in the October 1992 issue of *Spirit*, about the same time Chicago native Jack Scanlan caught the red-eye from Los Angeles to visit his parents near Lake Geneva. On his flight was a copy of the magazine, and Scanlan was mesmerized by Morrison's story. At the time, Scanlan was working for Twenty First Century Films, best known for the Charles Bronson *Death Wish* series. It occurred to Scanlan that the Beast of Bray Road might make a good movie, so he gave me a call.

He wondered whether I thought I might be able to write a screenplay about Walworth County's werewolf. My mind raced ... the thought of a movie had never occurred to me. I had never written a screenplay of any kind before, and I had no clue as to a possible story line. But somehow, I heard myself replying, "Sure, why not?" We arranged to meet at the nursing home where his mother was staying to discuss the possibility.

While I may have been overconfident to think I could write a screenplay, I have to say I was not completely naive about the financial prospects. I knew writing anything on speculation was risky, that movies often did not get made, and that writers often did not get paid in such ventures, or at least not paid very much. But I thought it would be fun to learn a new writing skill, and I figured I had nothing to lose but time and reputation.



Movie poster, by fantasy artist Jeff Easley, based on the author's first screenplay.
—courtesy of Jeff Easley



Robh Ruppel's conceptual sketch of Mick Fleetwood as the Beast

—courtesy of Robh Ruppel

The fact that there were no events to base a movie upon at that point, other than the few isolated, harmless sightings I had learned of, should have been a major stumbling block. Instead, we decided to go for a fictional horror movie based loosely (and I use the term “loosely” loosely) on some of the events.

After reading a dozen or so how-to books, I managed to crank out what I judge in hindsight to have been the worst stinker of a screenplay seen in Hollywood since the legendary horror-meister Ed Wood. Suffice it to say, it involved an incarnation of Satan sitting in a Walworth County basement and creating mutant monsters via computer before unleashing them into the rustic countryside to ravage the unsuspecting populace. Oh, and there were battling angels, and the werewolf was a female with the head of a big cat! And no, I don't do drugs. But I probably read too much science fiction.

This screenplay was actually sent to actor Will Smith, my choice for the main battling angel, in the days when Smith was trying to break out of television and just before he had made it big on the silver screen. Smith had

a great rap song out then titled, “Then She Bit Me,” about something that sounded like a female werewolf, which I hoped to use as a theme song. Not too surprisingly, Smith never responded.



Clay maquette of Mick Fleetwood as the Beast

—courtesy of Cindy Jackson

If that weren't enough, Scanlan soon parted ways with Twenty First Century Films, leaving us without a production company to back the project. The movie should have been dead in the holy water, but this beast would not go gently.

Scanlan not only kept seeking to get the movie made, he arranged for a film professor from a respected California university to give me some writing pointers and critique a complete rewrite I did of the screenplay. I say that as if it happened in a few weeks, but it took more than a year. The rewrite really was much better; it had actual characters and no satanic computers. And it very nearly got made.



Mick Fleetwood posing as the Beast.

Scanlan's specialty was publicity, and he had worked in that capacity years earlier for Hollywood screenwriter and director Stephen Verona. Verona was best known for his film *The Lords of Flatbush*, which is still considered a cult classic. The film introduced his pal Sylvester Stallone. (*Lords* also included then-unknowns Henry Winkler, Perry King, and Susan Blakeley.) Scanlan was able to interest Verona in directing *The Beast of Bray Road*, although Verona would be able to rewrite the screenplay as he wished. I still have a copy of the contract.

For star power, we were able to interest rock star Mick Fleetwood, drummer and cofounder of the band Fleetwood Mac, in playing the beast and in providing what would have been an incredible musical score. Fleetwood stands just under six foot six and is the possessor of a haunting and mobile face. It was perfect casting. Fleetwood had already appeared in two other films: *Running Man*, with Arnold Schwarzenegger, and *Zero Tolerance*.

Luckily for me at the time, he was soon to play a concert in Milwaukee, and we were able to score backstage passes to meet and photograph Fleetwood for preproduction artwork.

I brought along some artist friends who specialized in Hollywood effects, and after the concert, Mick Fleetwood snarled obligingly while the three of us photographed him from every angle. Artist Cindy Jackson then made a "maquette," or smaller, scale model, of what Mick's head and face might look like with werewolf makeup applied. Fantasy artist Robh Ruppel

created a drawing of Fleetwood with pointy ears and fangs. The charismatic musician would have been stupendous in the title role.

Alas, as happens to an extraordinarily high percentage of would-be movies in Tinsel Town, the financing fell through. Stephen Verona went on to other pursuits, and I pretty much gave up on the movie idea for the time being. I say “pretty much” ... more about that later.

Permits for Werewolf Capture

Jack Scanlan in Hollywood wasn't the only person to think the Beast of Bray Road might be promotable. Sometime that year, a local fellow calling himself “Colonel Daniel Beam” made and began selling “Official Werewolf Capture Permits” for a \$2.50 fee. Featuring a cartoon wolf head and an outline of the state of Wisconsin with a black dot over Walworth County, the permit entitled the bearer to capture, but not kill, any werewolves found in a “20 square mile radius of Bray Road.” The colonel was apparently not looking to get rich from the loot he collected. Posters for the permit claimed that a “portion of proceeds” would go to the Lakeland Animal Shelter. The permit itself was signed by “Treasurer, Harry Face.”

	OFFICIAL WEREWOLF CAPTURE PERMIT	
ISSUED TO <u>LINDA GODFREY</u>		
Capture Season: Remainder 1992, night hours only. Area 20 square mile radius of Bray Road, Walworth Co., Wisconsin. Capture must conform to all DNR and Wisconsin trespass Regulations. Killing or wounding of Werewolves is illegal. Remember it may be a relative or friend with some hair of the dog that bit him. Use of silver bullet or any firearms not permitted. Use of trolling with road kill regulated by Wisconsin DMV. Sorry no season on Werewolves.		
Date _____	Treasurer <u>Harry Face</u>	Permit Fee \$2.50
©BEAM		

Werewolf capture permit.

Werewolf Votes Republican

Then there was the local politician who thought a werewolf might lend some cachet to his campaign. Chuck Coleman, a Republican state

representative, was running for Congress in February 1993 when he sent out this press release dated February 2. It came from the Coleman for Congress headquarters at the Mann Brothers Building in Elkhorn.

COLEMAN ALLEGES WEREWOLF ENDORSES CANDIDACY ELKHORN ... State Representative Chuck Coleman, 43rd Assembly District Legislator and candidate for Congress in the First Congressional District, today alleged the Werewolf of Walworth County has endorsed his candidacy for Congress in the upcoming Special Election. Coleman, who grew up in the Elkhorn area where the Werewolf has been sighted on several occasions, said he was “pleased to announce this first endorsement of his candidacy.”

Coleman claims the Werewolf endorsed his candidacy because “both of us know how to survive in a woods full of investigative reporters.” Furthermore, Coleman also claims that he received the endorsement because of his reputation “for serving all constituents without regard to special interest group membership, party affiliation or financial contribution.”

The Special Election is expected to be May 4th after a primary election in both political parties on April 6th.

That press release got Coleman quite a bit of notice, including demands from his opposition that he prove the werewolf indeed intended to vote Republican. Coleman sent a second press release in answer, dated February 10, 1993, from the same “Coleman for Congress” headquarters.

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING: COLEMAN ELKHORN ... Denying that his alleged support of the Werewolf of Walworth County was “cooked up,” and citing the long-held culinary test, “the proof is in the pudding,” State Representative Chuck Coleman, candidate for Congress in the First Congressional District, today released photographs of the Walworth County Werewolf “coming out of the woods” to endorse his candidacy.

When signing up for Coleman, the Werewolf said, “I want a Congressman who can address the beastly issues that we’re facing and go for the throat of the budget deficit.”

Coleman said that as the Werewolf’s State Representative he promised to meet him again at his “voting poll” on Bray Road.

Chuck Coleman claimed familiarity with the wooded Bray Road area because of “field trips” taken into the area during his years as an Elkhorn high school student.

The press release was accompanied by a photo of an apparently literate werewolf signing Coleman’s endorsement slate. I recently saw Coleman, who is now retired, and asked him who was in that costume. Turns out it was a local man named Robert Burnette, and Coleman rented the suit from a costume shop in Milwaukee.

“We were trying to develop a sense of humor, something lighthearted,” said Coleman. “I think that it revealed something about my personality.”

Coleman won the election, claws down.



Werewolf emerges from the brush to endorse State Representative Chuck Coleman.

CHAPTER FIVE

MORE COMES TO LIGHT. . . AND DARK

THINGS DID SLOW DOWN a bit after the initial flurry of sightings, but they never really stopped. As time went on, every time it seemed the horror story ripples had stilled, a new sighting on Bray Road would surface like the head of some long-necked sea monster and start another wave of interest. Sometimes I'd get one of those "you should contact my friend who saw this thing ..." calls; other times I'd hear something through the grapevine.

Supper in a Cornfield

A friend of mine who used to attend the same church, for instance, told me that a coworker of hers had reported seeing something that sounded like the other sightings. Her name was Sharilyn Smage, and she lived on a Bray Road farm. I happened to be acquainted with Smage through local school associations, and I gave her a call.

It was in fall in 1991, said Smage, that she was driving her black Ford Escort wagon down a tractor lane in a cornfield to bring supper to her husband. Suddenly, in front of her stood what she described as a large, four-legged, wolf-coyote-like creature. "It was staring at me," Smage told me, "on all fours."

Smage realized this was no ordinary coyote, however, because it stood higher than the hood of her car and indeed was tall enough so that, even standing on four legs, its eyes and Smage's were able to meet. After a moment, during which Smage says she felt no fear, the animal turned and ran off down another tractor lane that led to woods and a pond. Smage is

one of the few witnesses who said she wasn't afraid of the creature's gaze. "I thought it was neat," she quipped.

Scott Bray's Rock Pile

Then there was Scott Bray's rock pile. Although he was one of the most reluctant witnesses, Bray gave a firsthand account of his own sighting for an article in the fall/winter 1992 issue of *Strange Magazine*.

I've interviewed him several times, and his story of a dusk encounter in fall 1989 has remained consistent. He was outside, working on his Bray Road farm, when he noticed in the cow pasture a "strange-looking dog," which Bray likened to a coyote or German shepherd but much larger than either of those.

Bray also told me the creature he saw had pointed ears; "scraggly," black hair with some silver tips; and the same large chest that Doris Gipson had noted. Bray watched the creature retreat behind a rock pile, then armed himself with a stick and followed it. Once there, Bray was amazed to find the animal suddenly gone. He did see tracks about four inches wide and four to five inches long in the nearby dirt and thought they appeared "doglike." But the creature itself had vanished.

Scott Bray told me in a recent phone conversation that he has really always believed that what he saw was a coyote, probably a sick coyote. "In all honesty, I never thought it was the same thing everyone said they were seeing," he said. "I never took it very seriously then, and I don't now, either. I still wish this would just all go away."

Another Bite of Roadkill, Please

Another Bray Road witness was Elkhorn farmer Mike Etten, whom I interviewed by phone, with a recent follow-up. Like all the witnesses, he said what he saw is indelibly printed on his memory.

On his way home late one night in March 1990, Etten was startled to see something very like what Lori Endrizzi reported: "a dark-haired creature bigger than a dog, a coyote, or a wolf sitting like a raccoon sits." (That would seem to imply an animal on its haunches, rather than kneeling, as Endrizzi reported.) And like Lori Endrizzi, Etten also said it was eating something held in its front paws.

Etten said the creature looked at him as he passed it in his car. He estimated the body to be three to three and one-half feet long, with dark hair he described as “bearlike.” By the time Etten slammed on the brakes to get a better look, the animal had vanished. Etten confessed that he had been drinking that night, but he was not too impaired to see clearly or maneuver his car.

“I just kind of shook my head,” Etten told me, “and then it wasn’t there anymore, so I thought I’d better get off the side of the road, before someone wondered what I was doing sitting there.”

The creature was near a farmhouse, said Etten, in front of a cornfield. But since it was early spring, there were no cornstalks to help conceal it. “Right when I came over the hill, boom! It was there,” Etten said, “and I could only see it for two seconds. But it was nice, bright moonlight so I could see it real good.”

Etten noted that although there was no cover for the creature where it sat, the animal might have shot across the road to the sanctuary of a row of evergreen trees in the moments while Etten was slowing down and stopping, before he had a chance to look back again. The evergreens lead to a more densely wooded area, he said.

Etten assumed he had seen a small bear until he heard about the Bray Road sightings in January 1992, and then he began to think that perhaps he had seen the same thing as the other witnesses. His estimate of the creature’s size was shorter than estimates made by other witnesses, but it was sitting, not standing, when observed. And it still was big enough and strange enough to scare a tipsy man sober in a heartbeat.

The Strange Trial of Jose Contreras

Creature sightings, it seems, just seem to bring out the opportunist in people. Built-in public attention, the lure of a mystery to be solved—it’s an irresistible combination. Still, it takes a lot of creativity to see a legal loophole in a werewolf sighting, so I give Jose Contreras credit for that.

On January 6, 1993, a full month before Chuck Coleman claimed Beast of Bray Road endorsement for his run at Congress, I spied this cryptic little ad in a Delavan classified ad newspaper called *The Shopper Advertiser*: “Whoever went out on Bray Road to look for the werewolf it is very important to call [a local number was given].”

I bit. I called the number and found myself speaking to one Jose Contreras, who was anxious to verify that people, lots of people, were out roaming Bray Road in search of werewolves and that many of those wandering people were also packing heat in fear for their very lives.

There was more than self-defense behind the ad, however. About a year earlier, at 11:37 P.M. on March 2, 1992, Contreras had been discovered sitting in his car in the driveway of a house on Bray Road. The house belonged to a man who had employed Contreras three years earlier. A neighbor called the police, suspecting Contreras to be a prowler. In the glove compartment of Contreras' car police discovered a nine-millimeter handgun and fifty rounds of ammo.

When asked why he had the gun in his car, Contreras replied that he thought he needed it for protection against the "Bray Road werewolf." Why he thought the werewolf might be in his former employer's driveway was not clear.

As Contreras' trial drew near, he evidently thought he needed to bolster his claim of werewolf phobia by gathering other Bray Road prowlers to testify on his behalf. As far as I know, none came forward.

Contreras had to go to trial without werewolf backup not long after his ad ran in *The Shopper*. It's hard to say whether having comrades-in-arms would have helped him.

The odds may have been against Contreras making his case in the first place. Just to be sure there was no chance of a mistrial, the jurors had all been prescreened for any prejudicial beliefs in werewolfism. If any of them secretly gave even a glimmer of credence to the existence of hairy, wild hominids, none would admit that they believed a werewolf roamed Bray Road.

The monster-phobia defense completely disintegrated when District Attorney Phillip Koss nimbly persuaded Contreras to admit that had he actually seen a werewolf, Contreras would really not have taken time to remove the weapon from the glove compartment, load it, aim, and shoot. Contreras was forced to confess that instead, he would have been far more likely to just step on the gas and flee, as indeed most of the witnesses had done. So there went the self-defense gambit.

Still, Koss could not resist asking if, indeed, any of the bullets Contreras had taken with him that night were manufactured from silver. At least that would have implied some real belief in a supernatural threat. The

arresting officer affirmed they were not, finally rendering Contreras' arguments completely toothless.

Contreras ended up serving jail time after being found guilty of carrying a concealed weapon. And if other potential felons were watching the Contreras case with an eye to their own future trial strategies, they were probably unimpressed by the outcome. To my knowledge, and District Attorney Koss recently corroborated it, that was the last time "the werewolf defense" was used in a Walworth County courtroom.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATIONAL TV AND A TABLOID: IT ALL STARTS UP AGAIN

IN MAY 1992, producer Andrea Anderson of the national TV show *Sightings* came to Elkhorn from Los Angeles to get the skinny on the Beast of Bray Road. When beleaguered Scott Bray, tired of werewolf hunters shining flashlights around his house at night, heard about the visit, he said, “I hope this doesn’t all start up again.”

Earlier, head producer Andy Rothstein had called me at *The Week* to ask about the potential of a show. I told him there was very little chance that they could bring a camera crew to Bray Road and somehow find the Beast standing around, waiting for his close-up. He asked me if the story had broken nationally yet. I told him about the article in *The Sun*, written by “May Turner.” “I don’t get *The Sun*,” he sniffed. So how did he learn about the Beast of Bray Road? The connection was fungus.

The world’s largest fungus had recently been discovered in upper Michigan, and Rothstein was working with Larry Long of Wisconsin Public Television on a feature about the massive organism. It was Long who gave Rothstein the werewolf tip.

I didn’t have a lot to tell him because although some sightings were still trickling in, they had slowed down. As I noted in an article in *The Week*, things were probably much more turbulent in Los Angeles at the time, because the Rodney King riots were in full swing. Rothstein decided to send a crew to Elkhorn anyway. And it seemed like an omen when their rental car broke down right in front of the Walworth County courthouse.

It wasn’t the show’s fault that people had begun to clam up. I assisted the crew as best I could in finding witnesses willing to talk, but it was a meager group that finally gathered at Lori Endrizzi’s parents’ house the next Sunday afternoon.

We had tried to talk to Jon Fredrickson, for example, but he understandably did not want to show his face on camera for fear it would expose his undercover animal rescue work. Doris Gipson and Heather Bowey had endured enough teasing at their respective schools. Scott Bray did turn up to tell his story and also graciously hosted the film crew for a shoot on his property, at his famous rock pile.

Endrizzi told her story, too, adding that she always looked for the creature whenever she drove along Bray Road. She said the sighting had no negative impact on her life, “just a lot of people asking me questions.” And with some prodding, she speculated, “Who says there’s not werewolves? Could be ... could be.”

The *Sightings* segment was supposed to air June 19, 1992, on the Fox Network. The producer sent me a videotape of the show and, strangely enough, the Beast of Bray Road was never mentioned!

Titled “Monsters,” the show began by telling how President Theodore Roosevelt’s hunting party once encountered a Bigfoot, or at least came upon a scene where a trapper had been killed and half eaten. Surrounding the area were footprints eighteen and a half inches long. Supposedly Roosevelt was obsessed with finding Bigfoot after that.

The show went on to discuss a humanoid creature known as “Lizard Man” that haunted Bishopville, South Carolina. Still no mention of the Beast of Bray Road. The show also brought in the Loch Ness Monster. All through the segments, “teaser” spots of Lori Endrizzi kept appearing, making it seem as if she were talking about the other monsters featured on the show.

“I think it was an unnatural creature,” said Lori in one spot. “It scared me because of the traits it had.” “It wasn’t a natural thing,” she said in another segment.

Scott Bray and his rock pile never made it on screen, either. The show concluded with the tantalizing question, “Could it be that beasts are created by the toxic waste of the twentieth century?” It theorized that perhaps the fact that the Pacific Ocean was “heating up” meant that other monsters would yet be discovered.

I never received an explanation as to why the Beast was censored after all that trouble. Frankly, I doubt that it cared. It had other places to go, people to see, roadkill to scarf.

New Munster Easter Monster

Martha Kerkman contacted me after seeing an unidentifiable creature in April 1992, just before the *Sightings* crew came around. She lived in a town with the strangely appropriate name of New Munster, which is in western Kenosha County, not far from Lake Geneva. She was thirty-six years old when she saw the creature, and she worked part time in her husband's construction business. She certainly appeared to be a credible witness.

She lived in a small, country subdivision not far to the north of Highway 50, surrounded by an undeveloped area of marshy, wooded land that was bordered by cornfields.

"It was a cloudy, drizzly kind of a day," she told me, "and we were having Easter at my in-laws' house, and I was standing in the rec room window over there, and I happened to look out this way and I saw a four-legged animal, with very long, deep, brown fur, walking, and then it just kind of trotted off behind those trees over there, and then I couldn't see it any more. I just thought it was so unusual because it looked like it was too large to be a dog, but it was too small to be a cow or anything like that. And that was all I had seen of it."

Kerkman probably wouldn't have thought much more of it, she said, except the next day she and her neighbor, Peggy, were out on their daily morning walk when Peggy told Kerkman she had seen something really odd out of her living room window. The women realized almost instantly that they had seen the same, strange animal. Peggy said she had never seen anything like it, either. And their descriptions matched exactly. "What was so ironic," said Kerkman, "was we were filling in each other's sentences on what we saw."

Both women agreed the animal had very long, dark brown fur, and Kerkman does not remember seeing horns. Peggy had a better look than Kerkman at the animal's rear because it was walking away from her, and she did not recall seeing a tail. Kerkman walked out to where Peggy saw the creature, on the south end of a park across from Kerkman's house, and did find tracks. "But I didn't know if they were from that animal," she said. They were not distinct enough to describe.

Kerkman did not get a good look at the animal's head. "I really couldn't see the details on the face for the brief moment I saw it, and with the distance," she said. "But it was so unusual! It was just so unusual.

Normally things like this, I just surpass them and kind of forget about it, but this is something you just don't forget," Kerkman added. "I keep looking out here, but I've never seen it again."

Kerkman estimated that her friend Peggy was twice as close to the creature as Kerkman had been. Peggy yelled to her husband when she saw it, said Kerkman, but it was gone before he got there.

I traveled to New Munster in 1994 (yes, I know it took me two years; I have no excuse) to meet Kerkman in person and photograph the area where she and Peggy saw the creature. The brushy habitat with a creek running through it looks wild enough to shelter and hide a large mammal, at least temporarily, as well as provide plenty of small prey animals and water.

In a recent phone interview, Kerkman said that although she still lives in the same neighborhood, she has never seen the creature again. And she is adamant that it was not something supernatural. "I would never say it looked anything like a werewolf; it was some kind of animal," she said.

An animal neither she nor her neighbor could identify, that is.



Author plants a supermarket chicken along Bray Road as bait.

—courtesy of Terry Mayer

Inside Edition's Inside Story

Sightings was not the only nationally broadcast TV show to have picked up the Beast of Bray Road on its satellite screen, I learned in 1993, when I received a call from a producer for the popular "Inside Edition." I

told them about the bad luck *Sightings* had with finding witnesses, but they were determined to finesse a show out of whatever they could find.

We made the obligatory trip to Bray Road, took the usual shot under the Bray Road street sign, and walked along the road shoulder. The crew came to *The Week* and decided my desk in the “bull pen” area, where four staffers shared a tight space, wasn’t going to work for their purposes. They managed to persuade managing editor John Halverson to let us use his office instead, so I was shown in my main segment with a nice antique typewriter and green plant as props. I held the letter from the Robert Bushmans and read parts out loud.

That would have been pretty dull, except the producers took the trouble to drive to St. Nazianz and actually film Robert Bushman discussing his sighting. Just seeing the Bushmans, an average Wisconsin couple if there ever was one, admitting they had witnessed something of high strangeness lent a good deal of credence to the entire sequence.

They also filmed Lori Endrizzi out on Bray Road, and nabbed Tom Brichta and Scott Freimund over in Jefferson County. Although the final TV version had its share of werewolf movie clips mixed in, I thought the show did a very creditable job, probably with the least amount of error of any of the TV shows, in presenting the Beast to the world.

Chicken in the Ditch: A Bray Road Vigil

The tabloids hadn’t finished with us, either. A magazine called the *National Examiner* called me in March 1994. They offered to pay a photographer and me each a nominal fee to sit out on Bray Road for the better part of a night in hopes the werewolf would come after us and we’d get a good shot of it before our gruesome deaths. The photo would be recovered later from the bloody camera tossed aside in the melee.

Terry Mayer, a photojournalist who also worked at *The Week*, was as open to nominal fees as I was, so he was glad to go along, brushing all bloody death thoughts aside. We were instructed to buy a supermarket chicken and place it by the road, keeping a close watch on whatever might come to snatch it.

As I’d expected, the *Examiner* was sadly disappointed. Mayer and I carefully placed the raw chicken in the shallow ditch, near enough to some bushes to provide cover, yet in the clear so Mayer could get a good shot. He

took plenty of action shots, too ... of me setting the chicken into the dirty snow that still clung to the early spring landscape. With natural refrigeration like that, at least we didn't have to worry we'd be poisoning any unsuspecting creature with spoiled meat.

Then we sat, chatted, waited, and watched. The results were predictable; the chicken lay forlornly naked in its icy bed, and no wild behemoth came drooling. We heard a farm dog bark once or twice, and now and then a truck would rattle past. We'd taken the precaution of informing the sheriff's department we'd be out there in case anyone mistook us for prowlers, but there was no visible reaction—human, animal, vegetable, or supernatural—to our presence.

Sometime around midnight, after another check with the flashlight revealed not even a footprint. We'd run out of office chitchat and were both having a hard time staying awake, so we decided our mission was fruitless and left. The next day the chicken was gone, of course, with drag marks nearby. Either that lonely farm dog or some lucky raccoon had the meal of a lifetime. But I was sure the chicken in the ditch hadn't ended up gulped down a werewolf's gullet. Well, *pretty* sure.

Although my own potential Bray Road encounter was less than thrilling, I provided the *Examiner* with a full account of our mission, as well as a newly written article on the sightings I knew of at the time. They rewrote it a bit, so that at the end, it appeared something had indeed taken the bait. Their last sentence in the revised version read, "And then, THE CHICKEN WAS GONE!" (I think they may have seen Dan Morrison's article.) I was never able to confirm when, or if, the story ran.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“THE DOGMAN OF MICHIGAN”

PERHAPS BY this point readers who don't hail from Wisconsin are starting to wonder if there is something “funny” about this state's population that predisposes them to see strange, furry creatures—something related, perhaps, to overdoses of cheese or beer. I might have wondered that myself, had I not received a surprising phone call soon after the first sightings hit the news wires. It was from a radio deejay named Steve Cook, from our neighboring state of Michigan, and what he had to say lent some amazing support to the Bray Road sightings.

Cook was amazed to hear about our sightings, he told me, because they sounded almost exactly like a northern Michigan creature called “the Michigan Dogman” that was rumored to haunt desolate logging camps. Half man, half dog, with pointy ears and a penchant for in-your-face leering, Cook's creature *did* sound like a lickin' cousin of the Beast of Bray Road.

“The Legend”

In fact, Cook had written a song he called “The Legend,” with lyrics pulled straight from the tales of dogman encounters. “I've always been a folklore collector,” Cook told me.

He played his ballad on April Fool's Day in 1987 on WTCM radio in Traverse City and was, as I can now understand, not prepared for the reaction. People who had had their own close encounters with the dogman got the shakes when they heard Cook's song. Then they picked up their phones. “People were calling in and saying, ‘Where did that song come from? My dad saw this thing,’” said Cook. Evidently, something scary had been around for a long time in Michigan's north woods. Cook's song began

spreading to other Michigan stations, and local newspapers expanded the story. Here are the lyrics (reprinted by permission of Steve Cook).

*A cool summer mornin' in early June is when the legend began,
At a nameless logging camp in Wexford County where the Manistee River ran.
Eleven lumberjacks near the Garland Swamp found an animal they thought was a dog.
In a playful mood they chased it around 'til it ran inside a hollow log.
A logger named Johnson grabbed him a stick and poked around inside.
Then the thing let out an unearthly scream and came out ... and stood upright.
None of those men ever said very much about whatever happened then.
They just packed up their belongings and left that night and were never heard from again.
It was ten years later in '97 when a farmer near Buckley was found,
Slumped over his plow, his heart had stopped.
There were dog tracks all around.
Seven years past the turn of the century they say a crazy old widow had a dream of dogs that
circled her house at night.
They walked like men and screamed.
In 1917 a sheriff who was out a walkin'
Found a driverless wagon and tracks in the dust like wolves had been a stalkin'.
Near the roadside a four-horse team lay dead with their eyes open wide.
When the vet finished up his examination he said it looked like they died of fright.
In '37 a schooner captain said several crew members had reported a pack of wild dogs
roaming Bowers Harbor.
His story was never recorded.
In '57 a man of the cloth found claw marks on an old church door.
The newspaper said they were made by a dog.
He'd a had to stood seven foot four.
In '67 a van load of hippies told a park ranger named Quinlan, they'd been awakened in the
night by a scratch at the winda ...
There was a dog-man looking' in and grinnin'.
In '77 there were screams in the night near the village of Bellaire.
Could have been a bobcat, could have been the wind.
Nobody looked up there.
Then in the summer of '87, near Luther it happened again.
At a cabin in the woods it looked like maybe someone had tried to break in.
There were cuts in the door that could only have been made by very sharp teeth and claws.
He didn't wear shoes 'cause he didn't have feet; he walked on just two paws.
So far this spring no stories have appeared.
Have the dogmen gone away? Have they disappeared?
Soon enough I guess we'll know 'cause summer is almost here.
And in this decade called the '80s, the 7th year is here.
And somewhere in the north woods darkness a creature walks upright
And the best advice you may ever get ...
Is don't go out at night. (eerie wolf howl)*

Sightings and Stories of the Dogman

“Fear gripped Robert Fortney as he shot and killed one of five dogs that lunged at him as he stood on the banks of the Muskegon River in 1938,” wrote Sheila Wissner in the (Traverse City, Michigan) Record-Eagle on April 25, 1987. “But fear escalated to cold terror as the only dog that didn’t run off reared up on its hind legs and stared at Fortney with slanted, evil eyes and the hint of a grin.”

Sound familiar? And notice that Fortney’s tale happened in 1938, only two years after Mark Schackelman encountered a similar creature behind Saint Coletta’s near Jefferson, Wisconsin.

Wissner said the man from Cadillac, Michigan, found himself recalling that traumatic incident when he listened to “The Legend.” Fortney’s encounter took place near Paris, Mecosta County, which lies about halfway between Lake Michigan and Saginaw Bay. Although Fortney said he “wouldn’t want to call it a dogman,” neither did he know what to call the black canid that fearlessly locked eyeballs with him. An ending to the tale wasn’t reported, but evidently the creature and the human finally backed off from one another, because Fortney lived to tell the tale some forty-nine years later.

Wissner also interviewed a “history buff” from Manistee County, Michigan, which borders Lake Michigan in the northern third of the state. The “buff,” Clarence Gillispie, had collected several stories of dogman sightings in that county. Gillispie told Wissner that he heard one story from an old lumberman who had gotten it from two friends of his. Gillispie tried to interview the two witnesses but, as I’ve found out happens all too often, the men refused to talk to Gillispie directly.

Still, Gillispie was able to record the gist of their story. They had been fishing near Manistee on Claybank Lake one day just as the sun was setting, when an animal swimming toward their boat caught their attention. Taking it to be a coonhound that one of them owned, they ignored it until it got close. It was at that point the two men realized that the “swimmer” had a dog’s head and a man’s body!

The men, very frightened, did the natural thing and began to row away. Fast. But to escape, they first had to emulate former President Jimmy Carter’s famous “club the swimming rabbit” maneuver (Carter was also in a boat when he was “attacked” by a dripping cottontail near the end of his term ... who knew rabbits could swim?) and whop the creature a few times

with an oar. Like Carter, they managed to keep it from climbing into the boat with them, and they made their escape.

The reporter did contact one of these men, but he would not talk to her about it, insisting that he didn't know what it was he saw and that he "didn't want to go into it."

As word got out on the dogman, its popularity soared. In the weeks that followed April Fool's Day, Cook's song became the most requested title on WTCM radio, bested only by the immortal Ray Stevens hit, "Would Jesus Wear a Rolex on His TV Show," according to the local paper. The station sold tapes of "The Legend" for four dollars each and donated half the proceeds to a local animal shelter.

Cook took some liberties with the real legends in his song, changing the location of one sighting from Big Rapids to a Wexford County lumber camp, for instance. Cook said he chose to use the word *dogman* instead of *wolfman* because it sounded more familiar and "homey."

There is a supernatural aspect to the song, which warns that the creature occurs only in the seventh year of each decade. That doesn't exactly hold true, if you line up the actual events the legends are based on year by year, but it does lend an eerie chill to the tale.

What caught my attention in Cook's song were the parallels between the dogman incidents and the Beast of Bray Road sightings, even though "The Legend" was published almost five years earlier and the Wisconsin witnesses said they hadn't heard of it. I know I hadn't. The lumberjacks who thought they saw a dog, until it stood upright, is very similar to the story of Heather Bowey and her little cousins. And the creature's "unearthly scream" while standing upright sounds very much like Mark Schackelman's "gadarrah" sighting.

The "crazy old widow" who had a dream of dogs walking upright around her house at night resembles the single, older woman from near Jefferson who reported an upright creature stalking her farm and home. And the "claw marks on the old church door" sound like that same woman's claim that she found claw marks seven feet off the ground around her door.

The story about the farmer found slumped over his plow, dead from a heart attack with "dog tracks all around" reminded me of a tale told me by an area resident that I never published because it wasn't a sighting. But the "old-timer" said that around the time of the Great Depression, farmers would seem to suddenly go missing. "A guy's lunch bucket and boots

would be lying there in the field,” he told me, “and he was gone.” He said in the incident he was thinking of, the man’s wife told people he went to Arkansas.

But there are more dogman stories. Another told by historian Gillispie was that of a Manistee County man who was parking with his girlfriend in a wooded area one night when they heard something suspicious. Due to the nature of their activities, the windows had become steamed so they couldn’t see out. When they cautiously wiped a spot clean, there was the face of a dogman staring back in at them. Gillispie said the man told him he swore off parking from that day forward. This is *very* like a sighting I’ll get to in Chapter 14, “the Beast of Corncob Lane.”

Jim Mencarelli, of the *Grand Rapids Press*, wrote an article for the paper that, like Wissner’s story, appeared in April 1987. The headline reads “DOGMAN? ‘Attack’ Brings a 90-Year-Old Legend to Life Again Up North.”

Cook’s song was already making the rounds of Michigan radio when the state Department of Natural Resources reported an attack on a cabin by some unknown animal near Luther, a small town in northern Michigan. People immediately associated the cabin, with its ripped-up screens and mangled door frames, with the dogman legend, especially after the DNR determined the tracks and bite marks were made by a dog or other canine, rather than a bear!

Mencarelli headed for Luther himself to find out. He interviewed local bartender Ann Cavendar and found people were talking about the seventh-year dogman prophecy that Cook had made famous.

Mencarelli said the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce even received calls from would-be tourists wanting to know if the northern woods of Michigan were still safe for travel. Newspapers around the country picked up the story. Radio commentator Paul Harvey spoke of the Michigan Dogman in his news and comments, and people from as far away as Germany clamored for copies of the song.

Back in Luther, bartender Cavender told Mencarelli that although a few brave people drove out to the town of Baldwin to have a look at the cabin area, they later confessed they were too frightened to leave their cars. Cavender also said one of her children found a book on Michigan legend and lore that confirmed the stories of the dogman.

Mencarelli interviewed Robert Fortney, too (the man who was attacked by five dogs, one of which stood up to challenge him). In Mencarelli's article, Fortney described the "dog" as "a large black animal," which stood on its hind legs while it glared.

As a fundraiser, Cook's "The Legend" was quite successful. It netted more than two thousand dollars for the Cherryland Humane Society. But that wasn't the last time a werewolf would make the news in Michigan.

Theater of the Mind

"Simulated Werewolf Hunt Amazes, Angers Listeners," growled headlines in the *Grand Rapids Press* on February 16, 1992. Reporter Ruth Butler called it "an exercise in theater of the mind" when WCUZ disk jockey Ron Bailey took listeners on an imaginary hunt for werewolves. The odd thing is that the hunt was inspired not by the Michigan Dogman, but by Wisconsin's Beast of Bray Road!

Bailey had read the Associated Press accounts of Walworth County's creature and immediately requested a radio field trip to Wisconsin. Denied travel permission, Bailey did the next best thing and enlisted the Grand Rapids Radio Players who helped "flesh out" a story. The group did their broadcast from a park outside Grand Rapids while pretending to be just outside Elkhorn, Wisconsin.

They invented a slew of characters including a skeptical veterinarian, a teacher who was attacked after school, a thirteen-year-old girl, and an Elkhorn restaurant owner whose main line was "the sightings are the biggest thing around here since girls basketball in '88." The players added sound effects such as crunching snow and snapping twigs and exclaimed over sights such as mauled, dead deer and glimpses of dark things running through the woods.

The werewolf hunt broadcast was a worthy forerunner to the 1999 *Blair Witch Project*, a staged "docudrama" movie supposedly filmed with a camcorder by teens hunting the supernatural in a forest.

Satisfyingly for most of the radio show's audience, the broadcast ended with screams, crackles of static, and then abrupt silence. People began calling the radio station immediately after the ruse was admitted. Some had believed they were hearing a true, live account and felt both disturbed and betrayed. Others compared it to Orson Welles' 1937 *War of the Worlds* radio

broadcast, when Welles pretended to be reporting a Martian invasion of the world, said Butler.

The dogman was not dead yet, either.

“So the officer and I went out there to take a look at it. And he just tried to chew in the doors, and you could see a dog print outside the window there so it was obviously a dog.” This quote, from one of the men who investigated the canine break-in at the cabin near Luther, found its way into a new version of “The Legend” released on CD the year the creature was prophesied to return, 1997. Steve Cook later said that almost simultaneously with the CD’s release, strange coincidences began. In Kingsley, Ellsworth, Gaylord, and Cross Village, said Cook, farmers began reporting numbers of small livestock snatched and “gone missing” overnight.

Black Dogs and Witchie Wolves

Across Lake Michigan in Door County, Cook added, reports came from “dozens of people, including a local sheriff and a judge,” who said large packs of black dogs were seen walking on their hind legs, noting that the incident was featured on Fox TV’s *Sightings* program.

Looking for verification, I called the *Door County Advocate*, a newspaper located in Sturgeon Bay, and talked to Joe Knaapen, a reporter who had worked there for two decades. Knaapen did remember something about black dogs around 1997, he said, but it wasn’t that black dogs were being seen. It was that they were going missing!

“There were lots of reports of big dogs and black dogs missing,” he told me, “and it was supposed to be related to possible cultic activity.” Knaapen couldn’t remember doing any major story, he said, partly because the few witness reports didn’t pan out. “I recall chasing around the quarry area, following Bay Shore Drive to where you turn north to go to Sturgeon Bay,” he said. “I spent a night with a deputy in a squad car after some bones were found.”

The bones were identified as those of a deer rather than a dog, however, and no satisfactory explanation for the missing black dogs was ever established. As for the cultic activity, “We checked it out but we found nothing to verify that,” he said.

In 2002, WTCM radio issued another CD, this time of its annual broadcast of spooky Halloween stories called *The Haunting of Northwest Michigan*. This was their fifteenth-anniversary edition, and it contained five “stories.” The first was an expanded version of “The Legend,” and the other four were well-told ghost tales that were revealed as fiction at the end of the CD. However, the cut containing “The Legend” was declared to be entirely true.

Why black dogs ... or dogmen ... in Michigan? The most closely related phenomenon I could find was an account written by David A. Kulczyk for the spring 1996 edition of *Strange Magazine* and recounted in *The Werewolf Book: Encyclopedia of Shape-Shifting Beings*. The subject was “Witchie Wolves,” supernatural beings who were said to inhabit a wilderness area called Omer Plains on the eastern shore of Lake Huron, about thirty-four miles north of Bay City, Michigan.

The story of the Witchie Wolves sprang from Ojibwa legends about guardian spirit dogs entrusted with the endless task of watching over sacred burial grounds. The Witchie Wolves were supposed to be invisible, but if other types of supposed apparitions and ghosts can occasionally appear to humans, why not canine guardian spirits?

An interesting side note is that one repeated feature of Witchie Wolf encounters in modern times is the denting and scratching of cars, just as both Tom Brichta and Doris Gipson reported in Wisconsin.

There is another historic account of “hair-covered, manlike beings” in northern Michigan in the 1860s. In a publication called *Crypto, Hominology Special Number 1*, author Loren Coleman cites Mark Hall’s story of such creatures seen near Lakes Huron and Saint Claire and which continued to be sighted up until 1983.

As for black dogs, they are a topic so frequent in werewolf lore they almost deserve a chapter of their own. And they shall have it, heading off the next section of this book. But for the next word on the Michigan Dogman, everyone will just have to wait until its next scheduled appearance in the seventh year of the decade, 2007.

PART TWO

**THE WHY, WHEN, AND WHERE OF
WEREWOLVES**

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE UBIQUITOUS BIG BLACK DOG

DURING A BOUT with the flu while writing this book, I was enjoying a good third or fourth read of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte when a single page brought me up short.

I remembered certain of Bessie's tales, wherein figured a North-of-England spirit, called a "Gytrash," which in the form of a horse, mule or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travelers, as this horse was now coming upon me...

... close down by the hazel stems glided a great dog, whose black and white color made him a distinct object against the trees. It was exactly one mask of Bessie's Gytrash—a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head....

Nothing ever rode the Gytrash, it was always alone....



A black dog, the kind that engenders fears of werewolves and witchcraft.

England's Black Menagerie

Although Jane Eyre's black dog was also touched with white, her story of the spooky Gytrash published in the late 1840s seemed strangely familiar. You may recall the black dogs gone missing in Door County or the black dog that stared down the Michigan man. Big black dogs seem to be connected with supernatural doings around the world, throughout history.

The Werewolf Book: The Encyclopedia of Shape-Shifting Beings, by Brad Steiger, confirms Jane Eyre's view of England as a place where sinister black dogs abound. "The vast majority of black dog folklore," it says, "depicts the dark canine as an ominous creature that forebodes death to those who behold it." It's a good thing Michigan's Robert Fortney didn't know that.

A British investigator named Charles Walker claimed only a few decades ago to have discovered a cult called "Friends of Hecate" that practiced dog sacrifice in Sussex, England. Hecate was a Greek goddess sometimes shown with a dog head, whose three-headed pet dog Cerberus

guarded the gates to Hades. (British author J. K. Rowling used a similar beast as a guardian in her famous *Harry Potter* books, which are also sprinkled liberally with werewolves and shape-shifting dogs.)

Also in England, Newgate Prison expects visits from a black dog just before prisoners are executed. They say this has been happening for four hundred years, ever since an unlucky prisoner named Scholler was cannibalized by his fellow inmates before he could be brought to trial for his alleged crime of witchcraft. The dog appeared and took revenge shortly after the ghastly feast.

An Internet page called Ghostly Black Dogs (see the Bibliography for full Web address) says this creature goes by many names besides Gytrash in Great Britain, according to which county you are in. The names are far more colorful than the somber dogs, including monikers such as Shriker, Barguest, Black Shuck, Skeff, Moddey Dhoo, Yeth, and Wish Hound.

The meaning of Black Shuck, the article says, can be traced back to an old English word, *Scucca*, which means “demon.” The *Wish* Hound doesn’t refer to granting desires but to an old word for “marsh.” Many of the other words also seem to have associations with wild, country places where the dogs are often sighted, according to the Web site.

Roadways are also common sighting places for the black dog, which is only natural because most humans travel along designated routes to reach their destinations.

Of course, our Beast of Bray Road was not only named for a road where frequent sightings occurred, it seems to relish roadside living, usually popping forth from cornfields along county highways and byways. And what does it eat? Roadkill!

The Ghostly Black Dogs page also tells of a murderous ebony canine in sixteenth-century Peterborough that killed members of two different church congregations by wringing their necks *and* burning them. It doesn’t say how the burning was accomplished. “In ancient European folklore, the dog is seen as both the guardian and consumer of dead spirits,” the site explains. It also says that black dogs are not always seen as evil; sometimes they can be benefactors and protectors.

I found a strange example of this benevolence across the Atlantic from the United Kingdom.

A Fortunate Canadian Cree

In 1823 an Anglo-Canadian fur trader named George Nelson wrote about a story told to him by a Cree warrior while Nelson was living in Saskatchewan, Canada (*The Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth*, 1823). Nelson was very interested in the lives of the indigenous people he lived among, especially their religious beliefs and nature lore. Luckily, he kept a diary.

In this particular entry, Nelson recorded that on a trip to a furtrading post, the solitary Cree became caught in a storm and lay down on some ice to rest overnight. Needless to say, he was worried about freezing to death. But he soon had another worry, as he heard a noise and perceived a large, black animal “much resembling a wolf,” which came up to him and covered his body. Rather than devouring him, the big black canine lay on top of the Cree until his body was warmed, then rose up and seemed to beckon him to follow with eyes that “appeared like two candles.” (Yellow, glowing eyes?)

The creature led the Indian to an island and a water hole where other humans were camped. The others were able to see only the lights from the animal’s eyes but not the black “wolf” itself. The Cree told Nelson that he understood the animal to be a kind spirit that came to save him from dying in the cold.

The European Connection: Black Dogs and Witchcraft

Europeans just didn’t seem to share that kindly view of black dogs, however. According to Kathryn A. Edwards in *Werewolves, Witches and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief and Folklore in Early Modern Europe*, Bavaria, the land of “black forests” in southern Germany, had a devil of a time with black dogs, especially in the seventeenth century. At a shrine for St. Anastasia in the town of Benediktbeurn, a book for recording miracles was kept. A woman wrote in the book that she was terrorized by a black dog, which the church associated with the devil. Another miracle-book entry sounded more werewolf-like, with a strange twist: a man claimed a wolf attacked his flock of sheep; however, this wolf stood upright ... and had no head!

The Edwards book also documents European connections of black dogs with witchcraft. Trial documents for approximately 375 accused witches in the duchy of Lorraine still exist, the majority containing

confessions “encouraged” by torture. Many implicated various animals, including dogs.

One of the trials related to dogs was the 1630 accusation against Jennon Grand Didier, who was convicted based on villager’s tales involving wolves, a white cat, and a great, black dog. Exactly what role the animals played was not explained, but witches at the time were generally considered to have the power to shape-shift, or transform themselves into other creatures ... generally with no good purpose in mind. Cannibalism and sexual attacks were frequent purported outcomes of the shape-shifter’s nighttime excursions.

Other tales tell of “strange black animals,” such as the 1601 trial of Jannon Pierat who said she was walking through a woods to bring “two cheeses” to someone (shades of Little Red Riding Hood) when she saw a “great black beast” which seemed bearlike to her. She kept it away by crossing herself, and although she observed it “sometimes in the water and sometimes on land,” it didn’t come near her.

Another French witness whose husband was attacked by a wolf said that she and her husband later observed a “strange black animal” in their garden. They tried to stone it, but it would not go away. Later, when it had left, the husband went out to do his gardening but became weak in the legs and died. Of course it was all blamed on a werewolf.

Among the Yakut people of Siberia, shamans possess invisible spirit dogs to assist them, according to Joseph Campbell in *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. “The dogs of a bloodthirsty shaman possessed by evil spirits will kill cattle and people: grown up people, however they do not kill,” says Campbell, quoting a Yakut source.

So how do people all over the world come up with visions and sightings of eerie black dogs? Black symbolizes death in many cultures, especially ours, and dogs have served as guides, protectors, and even killers of man from the most ancient times. Dogs are the animals that live closest to humanity, next to lice, so they are always handy for blame when something shadowy this way stalks.

That still does not really explain the mysterious dog appearances, however. Are they flesh or phantom? Rin Tin Tin or Cujo? Man’s best friend or ... stretching it ... man’s beast fiend?

Many of the Bray Road witnesses used the word dog instead of wolf to describe what they saw. Most described the animals as dark in color and

perceived something unusual about them, if only their size.

Mike Etten and Scott Bray both saw dark dog-things that seemed to mysteriously vanish, though neither man saw it happen. But keep in mind that Jane Eyre's Gytrash, when the full story is told, turned out to be only her new employer's hunting dog.

CHAPTER NINE

THE WILD MAN OF LaGRANGE AND FRIENDS

Periodically for several years a “mysterious stranger” has made his home in the rough country north of LaGrange. He was a wild looking individual ... short, stocky, be-whiskered, unkept [sic] furtive and with no visible means of support. He lived in straw stacks and field barns and occasionally came to the Lauderdale store for food. He would never go inside to give his order but waited in the road for his package and then would disappear, perhaps for days. Naturally his wild appearance when he was seen gave women and children a fright.

—Whitewater (Wisconsin) Register, February 14, 1929

A WILD MAN! Although not an animal, this mysterious stranger still had to be hunted down and captured, decided Bill Thayer, constable of the town of LaGrange. The tiny community set along the crossroads of Highways 12 and H about eight miles north of Elkhorn had a church, several businesses, and a general store, which is still in operation today.

“The Store” as locals call it, now also sells and rents bicycles to the hordes of trail riders who come to pedal around the hilly, wooded terrain of the Kettle Moraine State Forest, and it does a brisk trade in coffee drinks and healthful “smoothies.”

But back in the 1920s, the LaGrange General Store offered basic groceries and supplies not only to its immediate village population but to the nearby farmers and the growing population around the Lauderdale Lakes chain just to the south.

In those days, LaGrange was still a fairly isolated spot. It lay on the very fringe of the Kettle Moraine, a thicket of glaciated woods whose hills and ridges once played a part in the Black Hawk wars, and which formed a dense haven for wildlife. The surrounding farm fields offered more cover and sustenance, especially when cornstalks rose higher than a man in the fall. It was a place fit for wild animals and wild people.

I found the story of the Wild Man of LaGrange quite serendipitously. It happened to be in the same newspaper issue as the article telling when the subject of my previous book, Myrtle Schaudé (*The Poison Widow*) of Whitewater was released from the state prison on parole. I could hardly believe my eyes when, after locating the article by searching for the issue nearest her release date, I also saw the headline, “LaGrange Wild Man Is Captured by Thayer.”

For one thing, I *live* in the town of LaGrange. The Store is only a few miles from my home and I’m a frequent shopper. But beyond that, I recognized a classic “wild man” story of the type that is often used to explain away sightings of hairy bipeds. Also, it was very near many of the sightings lumped under “the Beast of Bray Road” that happened not just on Bray Road but in northern Walworth and southern Jefferson Counties.

But back to the exciting tale of the wild man. As the *Register* put it, “It was no easy job but yesterday morning Bill got his hands on the stranger and Bill’s hands are the kind that stay put.” It didn’t say how Bill Thayer’s hands made contact with the fugitive, but somehow he wrestled the unshaved being into his car and drove his prisoner to Whitewater. He parked his car downtown, near the newspaper office, and prepared to transfer the wild man.

“The Wild Man beat him to it,” the *Register* said, “and momentarily free, started to run west on Whitewater Street with Bill in pursuit.” Thayer, who weighed more than two hundred pounds, was evidently not known for his sprinting ability. But the wild man’s legs were too short to navigate well in snow! Thayer captured the floundering creature with a flying tackle, subduing him with superior weight.

The wild man was duly dragged into Whitewater’s city hall, where the paper says those present looked “in amazement at the varied articles he wore in an effort to keep from perishing from cold. He is a foreigner, perhaps a Russian.”

The man somehow got it across to his captors that he wished to go free, but Thayer was in no mood to release him, and the sad fellow was packed off to the county courthouse in Elkhorn where he would be charged with vagrancy. The article ended with this musing about the man: “If he would talk he could, without a doubt, tell a story of experiences that would read like fiction.”

It is not clear whether the man was mute or simply spoke a language no one in the area could understand. Russian settlers would have been rare; the area was full of transplanted Yankees from out East, Germans, Scandinavians, Scotch-Irish, and other Europeans, so the townspeople were obviously making a semieducated guess on his origins. The man could have been speaking Neandertalese for all they knew.

It's easy to imagine, however, a farm wife heading out to the barn to milk her cows in the morning being scared silly by a hirsute, filthy, oddly dressed, short-legged, unintelligible creature popping out of her haystack. It's plausible that she might not even recognize the man as human if his skin was caked with dirt, his nails grown long like claws.

I wasn't able to discover any other articles about this particular wild man, but it's safe to say the Elkhorn jail probably didn't keep him long. The town was full of what the newspaper article called "tramps," and the editor of the *Elkhorn Independent* wrote on January 10, 1929: "The bums who visit Elkhorn make a regular practice of calling for their bath and warm quarters at the jail."

It's doubtful that one more pathetic-looking soul charged with vagrancy caused much uproar in Elkhorn, no matter how odd he looked, and I have a feeling "the Wild Man of LaGrange" was soon back out in the wilds once more, snoozing in haystacks and steering clear of lawmen.



Relief sculpture of a "Green Man" (note the leaves surrounding his face) decorating a chapel in Prague's Old Town Square.

Is it possible that he stayed a little farther west than LaGrange upon his release and that it was the Wild Man of LaGrange that Mark Schackelman

saw standing upon the mound behind St. Coletta's seven years later? It would explain the speech and the upright posture of Schackelman's creature, but I trust Schackelman would have noticed clothing and a human face, even if covered by a thick beard.

The height of the two doesn't match, either. The wild man was evidently a short and stocky person if his legs were so short he was hampered by running through snow in the city of Whitewater, and the creature on the Indian mound was more than six feet tall. The LaGrange Wild Man would hardly have seemed imposing to Schackelman, even at night.

Still, wild man stories were not unusual in Wisconsin around the turn of the century, although they have commonly been more identified with Bigfoot than with werewolves. Jay Rath, in his book *The W-Files: True Reports of Wisconsin's Unexplained Phenomena*, mentions two in his section on sightings of Bigfoot in Wisconsin.

Rath quotes the *Wisconsin State Journal* of August 1899 that the Chippewa County Jail was holding a "wild man" captured in a forested area there. According to local residents, the man had lived in the area for a decade, and the *Journal* noted that the man had "lost nearly all resemblance to a human being." Like the Wild Man of LaGrange, it was impossible to communicate with this person. He had apparently lost his powers of speech, but the article did not say whether he was mute or merely unintelligible.

A similar incident cited by Rath also appeared in the *State Journal*, this one in August 1900, concerning a "wild man... terrorizing the people north of Grantsburg." This wild man in Burnett County evidently lived in the woods, carried a hatchet, had grown a long black beard, and wore little clothing. He begged food from local residents and appeared to be the source of "blood-curdling yells." Again, there was no reference to any sort of physical animal characteristics. Today we would probably recognize him as suffering from some sort of mental illness. Had he lived a few centuries earlier he might have been executed as a werewolf.

Rath also tells the story of a "wild child" said to "haunt" Fish Lake near Michigan City, Indiana, in the summer of 1839. The child was described by local newspapers as "setting up the most frightening and hideous yells."

Not-So-Jolly Green Giants

Wild men were not something to crop up just in Wisconsin around the turn of the century. And they have often been associated with the supernatural or ancient legends.

For example, on a recent trip to Prague, the well-preserved ancient capital of the Czech Republic, I noticed frequent depictions of a wild-looking human face on pedestals and relief sculptures around the city. A recently published book called *Esoteric Prague: A Guide to the Secret History of the City* explains them. They are known as the Wild Man or *wodewose*.



A gallery of "wild men" images adorning a chapel in Prague's Old Town Square.

The word *wodewose* refers to woods or forest and comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, *wudewasa*, which can also mean savage or satyr. A variant on this theme is called the "Jack-in-the-Green" or "Green Man," usually surrounded by representations of greenery. According to the book, "They have been with us for centuries, yet no one knows where they come from and where they first appeared." The legend of the Green Man, speculates author Jiri Kuchar, may have begun in Suffolk, England, in the twelfth century.

In Suffolk, the story goes, shepherds found a girl and boy with green-colored skin living near the den of a wolf. They said they were from a race of people, all green, who lived in the depths of the earth. The boy died, but

the girl lived to marry a normal human. She also lost her green color. Note the association with the wolf!

The wild man of Europe has a different origin than the Green Man, according to Daniel Cohen's *Encyclopedia of Monsters*. Cohen says the wild man image was also prevalent throughout the Middle Ages but was shown "as a human of enormous strength and size ...with shaggy hair, and carrying a club." Like the Green Man and the wild men of Wisconsin, it also lived in forests and tried to avoid contact with humans.

Cohen quotes a book, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages*, by scholar Richard Bernheimer, who wrote, "As described by modern folklorists the Alpine wild man is a formidable creature, huge and hairy and mute and according to some so large that his legs alone have the size of trees." If the leg reference sounds unbelievable, just watch professional wrestling on TV sometime.

Cohen notes that people costumed as wild men were standard participants in medieval pageants (again, I offer the TV wrestling comparison) and that Charles VI himself dressed as a wild man in 1392 for a court festival. The suits he and some accompanying nobles wore were covered in "pitch and flax," which would have given the impression of allover hairiness.

Unfortunately, pitch is a highly flammable substance, and because lighting in those days was provided by torches, the inevitable happened and the "wild men" were accidentally set afire. The four noblemen burned alive in their pitch suits, but the king survived, although he was scarred for life as a remembrance of his portrayal.

Neanderthal Dreams

In Europe, some have tied the wild man legends to ancestral memories of the Neanderthal, a much stockier, early type of human known to scientists as *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*. The Neanderthals inhabited the Middle East and part of Europe by the time modern humans, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, moved into the neighborhood, but they are thought to have become extinct some thirty-five thousand years ago. There is evidence that modern humans and Neanderthals coexisted for many years, leaving plenty of time for the muscular, heavy-browed Neanderthals to become firmly entrenched in human oral tradition.

There is still controversy over just how different (or alike) the two groups were and whether they were able to interbreed, but the Neanderthals are now thought by most anthropologists to have practiced religious ceremonies and possibly even to have possessed some type of language. Some say they were actually human, just “differently foreheaded” (see more on Neanderthals in Chapter 18).

Whether the wild man concept was derived from natural observation of Neanderthals or from mythic sources, it is likely that European settlers brought this story with them when they emigrated to America, and rural Wisconsin tramps became wild men. But the “New World” already had its own legends of wild, primitive men who predated their ancestors on the North American continent.

Hairy Heart Beings and Windigo

Going back to *Orders of the Dreamed*, fur trader George Nelson’s early nineteenth-century diary of Cree and northern Ojibwa lore, this continent used to be inhabited by a primitive race called “the Hairy Breasts” or “Hairy Heart Beings.”

I’d like to note that stories of America’s indigenous people are not well served when treated as mere research references by writers wanting to bolster theories on various topics (myself included). Stories from Native American oral history have profound religious, sociological, artistic, educational, and practical implications for their indigenous creators and are still alive in the oral traditions of many American Indian nations. These stories should always be treated with respect.

However, this being said, it does not prevent the possibility that some of the stories do refer to actual historic remembrances, codified into story form. Native Americans were the sharpest imaginable observers of their environment, and many of the creatures that populate their spirit stories are also animals found in the natural world, such as beaver, bear, and wolves. If there were remnant hominid populations of some kind coexisting with Native Americans, they would surely have noticed and recorded them. I think it is entirely possible that the Hairy Heart Beings could fall into this category.

Also referred to by the Cree as “the Ancients,” these creatures were recognized by early Amerindians as being humans of some sort. But they

were said to be distinctly different in physical appearance, due mostly to an abundance of body hair. The hairy ones were much less sophisticated in terms of tool use and social structure. They were fond of capturing Amerindian women for dating purposes and were continually at war with their human rivals for occupancy of the land.

In their book on Cree religion and myth, *The Orders of the Dreamed*, Jennifer Brown and Robert Brightman say the Cree's explanation of the Hairy Heart Beings suggests "folk historical knowledge" of their own early ancestry, remade into an image of a more primitive race that lived here first. The authors also note that the same creatures are still talked about by modern Rock Cree, but as "ancient people" or (in English) "cavemen."

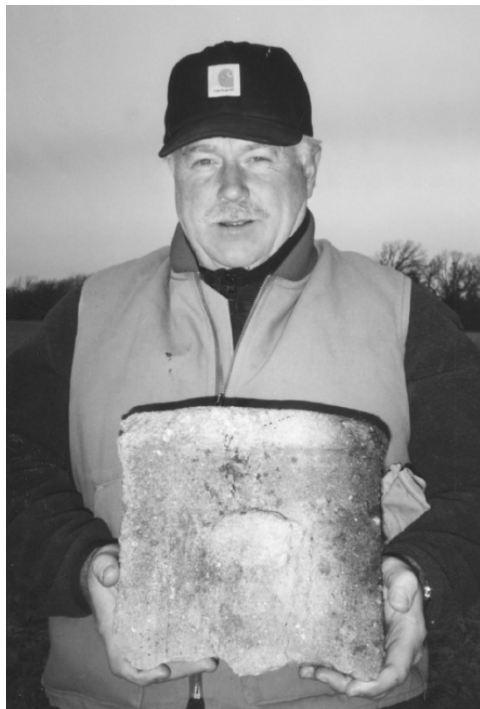
And another Cree word similar to the word for the Hairy Heart Beings refers to a separate, distinct race of early cannibals that, in turn, are *similar* to a better-known Amerindian "monster," the *Windigo*, sometimes spelled *Wendigo* or *Weendigo*.

The Windigo is a creature widely known among Algonquian-speaking tribes, and it has often been cited as possibly related to Bigfoot. For instance, Jay Rath in his book *W-Files* is talking about the Windigo when he asks, "As impossible as it may seem, could it be that the Chippewa (Ojibwe) Indian stories are true? Did Indian and monster co-exist in prehistory?" However, descriptions of the Windigo vary widely from tribe to tribe, and Wisconsin's Ojibwa describe the creature as more humanlike than did Algonquian people in other places.

In all stories, the Windigo is strongly related to the eating of human flesh. Some have suggested it was perhaps invented to explain isolated cases of cannibalism that happened in survival situations during long, northern winters. But tribe to tribe, its description changes from that of a completely supernatural being as tall as a tree, capable of wiping out whole villages, to transformed human beings gone berserk. Often it is found either to have a heart made of ice or, especially with the tribes living farther north, to be made of ice entirely. Its main trait is constant, all-consuming hunger.

In his book *The Manitou: The Supernatural World of the Ojibway*, native scholar and author Basil H. Johnston describes the "Weendigo" as a type of manitou, or incorporeal spirit or mystery, that appeared in winter to "stalk villagers and beset wanderers." Human beings could turn into Weendigo if they were greedy, or possibly by enchantment, according to some of Johnston's Canadian Weendigo stories.

A low-budget film called *Wendigo* and later renamed *Frostbiter: Wrath of the Wendigo* was made in 1987 by Michigan filmmaker Tom Chaney and released in 1990 by Troma. The film's monster is suitably skeletal, yet with powerful build and graced with multiple antlers, kind of like a mega-jackalope. As cheaply as this movie was produced (total budget a mere \$125,000!), the creature does look like a good representation of the descriptions given in the northern versions of the legend—a tall giant, sinewy and fearsome.



John Arnow, with stone found on his ranch near Palmyra.

Like the wild men of Europe, neither Windigo nor Hairy Hearts were described as animal-like or canine in facial features. But just as the *wodewose* persisted long enough in history to adorn cathedral walls in the Old World, these tales of supernatural beings may still contribute to New World man's ancient fear of hairy, humanoid creatures—including, perhaps, werewolves.

Interestingly, back in the nineteenth century, George Nelson's Cree informant nonchalantly told Nelson that two "nations" of Hairy Heart Beings were believed to still exist: one in Canada and another overseas. Perhaps we are still living with wild men, after all.

The Wolfen Stones of Palmyra

Still, wild men and Native American manitou both seem a bit far-fetched in connection with the Beast of Bray Road. Yet, there is one possible link to the European wild man that was literally dug up on a horse ranch just outside the small town of Palmyra, Wisconsin, in southern Jefferson County. It is a few miles north of the LaGrange beast sighting and not far east of the other Jefferson County sightings ... the heart of beast territory.

Palmyra was named by its original God-fearing settlers after an ancient town in the Syrian desert. Set amid small lakes and incredible bubbling springs, with the Kettle Moraine forests to the south and open prairie to its north, the fledgling town's site appeared as an oasis to the settlers, bringing to mind its Syrian counterpart. Never mind that the Syrian counterpart also featured a world-famous temple to Baal, the rain god.



“Wolfen” stone from John Arnow’s ranch.

If you are looking for Native American connections here, Palmyra will not disappoint. The town is snuggled just north of some natural features that were extremely important ritual areas for the native Potawatomi.

South of the town, in what is now state forestland, stands a tall ridge called “Bald Bluff.” An issue of the *Palmyra Enterprise* published in 1897 describes the top of the bluff as an important site for Potawatomi war

councils, where raids and battles on rival tribes were planned. The Indians used the high point of the bluff to send smoke signals to summon nearby tribes on days when the wind blew from the south. The Potawatomi considered the south wind sacred.

Just at the southeastern foot of the bluff lies a large “kettle,” or bowl-shaped depression formed by the glacier during the Ice Age, which the Potawatomi called the Great Spirit Wash Bowl. They would bathe in the sixty-foot-deep bowl as part of their ceremonies, believing that a steady south wind that lasted for several days would blow air up from the bottom of the bowl and fill it with water. When the wind changed, anyone still in the bowl would disappear as the water returned to the earth through the bottom, literally going down the drain.

About a half mile east of Bald Bluff is a massive boulder called the Elephant Rock because it looks like the body of an elephant with its legs sunk into the earth. The stone is twenty feet long and stands six to eight feet high and was said to be where enemy captives were tortured and sacrificed. The elephant rock is very close to an even more sacred spot, the Blue, or Aurelian, Springs, which were once dubbed the “Eighth Wonder of the World.”

The Potawatomi believed that life entered the world through underground springs, and this spring was the granddaddy of them all. Then early Palmyra residents turned it into a spa site called the Druggist’s National Sanitorium. Later, a real estate developer dammed the springs to create Blue Spring Lake, which is now completely encircled by houses. It was in the vicinity of these areas, which the Potawatomi considered places of great power, that a rancher found a strange object half buried in a rubbish pile near the fence line of his acreage.

The Ugly Horse Ranch was originally one of the oldest homesteads in Jefferson County. Present owners John and Andrea Arnow breed and train horses, host western riding activities, and run a bed and breakfast for people and their mounts. I wrote about the unique ranch for several publications, including *Western Horseman* magazine, and it was while taking photos for my article that a square, concrete block caught my eye.

On the ground in front of the bunkhouse was what looked like some kind of old pedestal about a foot square, with a face molded in relief on each of the four sides. The faces looked like werewolves!

It seemed like an odd thing to have on a Wisconsin horse ranch, and I asked John Arnow where he found it. "Oh," he said, "I dug it up in the back of the property." He actually had two of them, and a nearby neighbor had another, all nearly identical. What's more, he thought there might be others!

He was right. A quick dig a few months later revealed a fragment of another block, displaying one entire side with the same werewolfish face weathered but plainly evident. That meant there had to be at least four of the blocks, and my best guess is they date from the early twentieth century, because they are poured or molded concrete aggregate.

But why were they there? Arnow at first guessed that they were old headstones, perhaps tossed there by a farmer plowing up a very old farm family's grave site, but none of the stones bear any inscriptions, and they do not resemble known headstone styles. They look more like decorative blocks meant to top either columns or perhaps stone gateposts. But neither the Arnow home nor the farmhouse that lies on the other side of the fence line was the type of imposing manor home that would have demanded such gates. And why would an early Wisconsin farmer desire stones with wolfen or demonic faces for decoration?

The stones reminded me of something, however. The European wild man! I quickly consulted *Esoteric Prague* to see if I could find something similar. I did. The very same face, pointed ears and wavy fur and all, was in plain view, decorating a chapel attached to a building in the Old Town Square called the Carolinum.

Was it possible that an immigrant from Germany or old Bohemia brought them? The concrete blocks are very heavy, of course, and it would seem unlikely they would have been carried from the Old Country directly by an area immigrant. But the idea and design certainly could have been brought here and reproduced.

It is known that at least two cement block manufacturers operated in Palmyra around the turn of the century and beyond. And two farmhouses built by prominent, early families of Palmyra on other sides of the town feature the same mysterious wolf-faced blocks as column supports on their front porches. One is the former Adam Pancake farm on the west side, and the other is a castle-like structure which was built by a man named Victor Louis and overlooks Spring Lake. There has also been some speculation that perhaps the town's first Masonic Lodge may have used the stones found on Arnow's farm as column supports in their temple. It is interesting to note

that Prague, where the European wild man sculptures can be seen, is a city which was very hospitable to early Masons and is important to their history.

Still, until a more definitive historical record can be found, the good people of Palmyra are left to wonder just why their cement molders found wolfman images so popular among the townfolk in days past. For now, they remain a mystery along with the Wild Man of LaGrange.

CHAPTER TEN

“WEREWOLF?” “THERE, WOLF!”: EUROPEAN WOLFMEN AND THEIR FORE-WERES

IT IS NO SURPRISE that the famous and funny exchange from the 1974 Mel Brooks film *Young Frankenstein* (“Werewolf? “There, wolf!”) was uttered in Transylvania, the region in eastern Europe that filmmakers love to depict as the nexus of European monsters. But where did the Europeans get the idea of man-beasts?

Perhaps they had it all along. One of the world’s earliest known “manimal” or anthropomorphic figures, found in a thirty-two-thousand-year-old level of a West German cave, features the carved body of a man topped by an ivory lion head, according to the October 1988 issue of *National Geographic*. Anthropologists guess the carving might have represented early man’s attempt to capture the power of animals for themselves, but there is no way to really know.

The Egyptian jackal-headed god, Anubis, was passed on to Greek storytellers where he received a wolf’s head, because there were no jackals in Greece. And one Greek tale, in turn, revealed how the hero Danaeus became king after figuring out that the god Apollo had disguised himself as a wolf, which meant Apollo was sort of a divine werewolf. Or would that be godwolf?

Another legendary figure often cited by Bigfoot researchers as an early type of Bigfoot creature is the ancient Sumerian hairy wild man named Enkidu in the Sumerian tale “The Epic of Gilgamesh.” The Sumerians also had a dog-headed goddess named Bau, whose name is said to represent the sound of a dog barking (yes, bow-wow, no kidding!). And in the

underworld, Sumerians had to deal with a strange demon named Pazuzu, who had a canine face and a body covered in scales.

Less well known than the Sumerians and Egyptians are a people said to be descended from the ancient Egyptians, the Dogon tribe of Mali in Western Africa, who included in their pantheon a dogheaded goddess related to the Egyptian Anubis. Because the Dogon are related to the Egyptians, the original source of much Western culture, we'll make a little detour into Africa. It's just too interesting and dog related to pass up.

Follow the Dog Star

When the Dogon were studied by French anthropologists in the 1930s, it was discovered that they had an elaborate religion related to Sirius, known as the Dog Star for its placement in the constellation Canis Major. That in itself wouldn't be too amazing, because the Egyptians also paid a great deal of attention to Sirius, using it as a heavenly constant in their astronomy system. Our expression "dog days of summer" is related to ancient literature about the hot days that followed the rising of Sirius each year. But the Dogon also knew many scientific facts about Sirius that were not understood or "discovered" by Europeans until quite recently.

The French scientist Marcel Griaule was said to be the first non-Dogon with whom they shared their secret information. Although the Dogon had no telescopes, they knew, according to Griaule, that the planet Saturn had rings, that Jupiter had four major moons, and that Sirius had two companion stars in elliptical orbits and one of them was "the heaviest star."

In fact, scientists had just discovered in 1863 that Sirius did indeed have a dense and super-heavy "white dwarf" companion. They named it Sirius B, and it was not even photographed until 1970, but the Dogon already had ancient and accurate drawings of it, including a carving four hundred years old. They also insisted that there were actually three companion stars to Sirius, and the third was officially confirmed by Western science in 1995.

This and other detailed data were documented in a 1976 book by Robert Temple, *The Sirius Mystery*, based largely on Griaule's research. Unfortunately, later researchers were unable to confirm the same information that Griaule had so painstakingly recorded, and some of Griaule's book became controversial.

And incidentally, as far as I have been able to determine, there is no connection between their name, Dogon, and the Anglo-Saxon word *dog*. It's just more canine coincidence. But whether the Dogon truly had the latest scientific info or not, it is still fascinating that these remote people kept those ancient connections between dog-headed people, the Dog Star, and deities.

Viking and Germanic Werelore

As I mentioned earlier, European cultures stirred canine/human mixtures into their tales of mythic heroes and gods much as did the Egyptians, Sumerians, and Dogon. In Viking mythology, a father and son named Sigmund and Sinfiotli (they were also uncle and nephew, but we won't get into that) became twin werewolves in one adventure recounted in *Myths and Legends of the Vikings* by Quantum Books. The duo accomplished this feat when they came across two other men who were sleeping near a pair of wolf skins. What could Sigmund and Sinfiotli do but put the wolf skins on themselves? After a harrowing tale, they ended up shunning wolf skins for good, possibly an object lesson for would-be sorcerers.

Ancient Germans, perhaps drawing on memories of mythic creatures such as the lion-headed cave figure mentioned earlier, told of a trickster god named Loki who was always getting into trouble with the other gods. To punish Loki, the others turned his son Vali into a wolf and then caused Vali to attack and kill his brother Narve. This tale is told in the *MacMillan Illustrated Encyclopedia of Myths and Legends*, which also adds a tidbit about another Germanic-Viking wolf character, Fenrir, who swallowed the sun and then for dessert bit the moon.

Probably some of the longest-lasting and most effective manimal tales were those of Viking warriors called "berserkers" who wore wolf or bearskins into battle to make their foes think they were fighting an enemy that was more than human. Any European warrior who survived such a skirmish would doubtless never have forgotten such a spectacle and would have carried the tale home with him.

Werewolves Get Medieval

These memories and connections were doubtless all still percolating later on in medieval times and perhaps formed a basis for new legends and tales of human/animal morphing. As both human and wolf populations increased on the continent, wolves began to be more troublesome as predators. It has been suggested that greater numbers of wolves also meant more cases of rabid wolves and wolf-dog hybrids, both of which would behave more erratically than normal, healthy wolves. It is not hard to see how superstitions began to grow.

Even royalty was not exempt from the taint of werewolf suspicion. King John of England was accused of being a werewolf in the twelfth century, and the charge followed him to the grave. He had been buried in a consecrated cemetery, but the monks who attended it were unnerved by unearthly sounds coming up from the earth where John's body lay. They hastily exhumed the corpse and reburied it, presumably in ground less holy.

Ireland also fell prey to the werewolf's claw. The good St. Patrick himself was reputed to have transformed a whole tribe of Irishmen into werewolves after they angered him.

France seemed to be especially werewolf prone, with one of the most sensational alleged cases of mass werewolf, or as the French say, "*loup garou*," attacks ever recorded. Most books that deal with Bigfoot, werewolf, or other hairy hominid sightings give "the Beast of Gevaudan" at least a passing mention. I can't make an exception for myself.

It actually happened well beyond medieval times, in the mid-eighteenth century near the Auvergne Mountains, where sudden havoc was wreaked by a horrific creature that was known locally as "the Beast." Shepherders were particularly affected due to their remote job locations, but villagers and farmers were not immune. Hundreds of people were mysteriously savaged and killed in the space of about three years.

The culprit was not thought to be a natural wolf, partly because of the ferocity of the killings and partly because eyewitnesses described it as hairy all over with the ability to walk upright. Although it appeared wolfen, it also had a severe case of bad body odor, a trait that is more typically ascribed to Bigfoot-type creatures. Brad Steiger's *The Werewolf Book* added, "Its face was sworn to be like that of Satan, and its entire body was said to be covered with dark, bristly hair."

Official police and military squadrons tried to dispatch the creature but were unsuccessful. Steiger's book notes that "the years of 1765, 1766, and

1767 are spoken of as the ‘time of the death’ in the mountains.” Finally, a local village man named Jean Chastel caught up with the beast while part of a posse-like hunt, and he blasted it twice with silver bullets made from a consecrated chalice. The killings ended.

Just as in present-day Elkhorn, the debate began at once. Was it a *loup garou* or just a supercharged wolf? Some said werewolf; skeptics of the day said it was some other kind of exotic creature, such as a leopard. According to Steiger, Jean Chastel’s description of his quarry included “peculiar” feet and pointed ears. The only fact that is known for sure is that a very large wolf was recorded as being paraded triumphantly through the town after the beast’s demise. Supposedly, it was eventually buried when it began to decompose.

The French villagers of Le Gevaudan had a rich history of werewolf lore to draw upon when pondering the nature of their beast. A century and a half earlier, in the first decades of the 1600s, the Franche-Comte area of France was notorious for werewolf trials. In 1602, says Robin Briggs in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits*, no fewer than fifty people testified against alleged female loup garou Mengette Cachette. She was said to have killed two horses and made a boy ill, and was also alleged to appear in cat form.

Kathryn Edwards tells in her introduction to *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits* of other trials involving attacks on livestock that occurred in the early 1600s. The evidence against all the accused was very circumstantial, and confessions were most often obtained by torture.

The year 1618 was also a watershed year for German werewolves, believes David Lederer, another contributor to *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits*. The year marked the start of the Thirty Years’ War, which killed one-third of the Bavarian population. The reduced peasant population left fields clear for prowling wolves to move in. But long before the Thirty Years’ War started, a German man became one of the best-known werewolves in Western history.

Peter Stubbe, also known as Peter Stumpf or Peter Stubb, lived near the city of Cologne in the small town of Bedburg from 1525 to 1589 and was reported to have sought power through magic and sorcery from his youth. He declared that Satan had given him a magic fur belt (or girdle, as it was then called) that could transform him into a giant wolf.

He didn't declare that until his trial, of course, when he was threatened with torture, and his bestial nature was not suspected until after he had killed at least fifteen people. He was variously accused of cannibalism, corpse mutilation, rape, incest, and other atrocities. He was eventually discovered when a hunting party set out to find a predatory wolf, which transformed into a man right before the astonished eyes of the posse. They recognized him as their fellow townsman, and Stubbe was captured and dubbed the Werewolf of Bedburg. The convicted wolfman was dispatched by an execution so thorough that at the end, only small pieces of his body remained to be scorched into ash.

The werewolf stories of the European Middle Ages may have been connected to the stress people felt over coexisting in fairly close quarters with wolves. Having livestock and occasionally small children carried off by marauding predators must have made them feel quite helpless. Perhaps seeing their accused neighbors hanged for lycanthropy helped bring them some sense of control and closure, however falsely reassuring.

It's not surprising, therefore, that a great many methods sprang up for detecting whether one's neighbors were werewolves. Woe to the person whose third finger was overly long, who grew hairy eyebrows that tended to merge over the bridge of the nose, or whose ears might be smaller than normal or pointed! Another symptom that was very hard to detect without killing the suspect was hair growing *inside* the body.

Of equal concern was how one could avoid the condition oneself. The modern-day idea that a person can become a werewolf from being bitten by another werewolf was probably invented by Hollywood, especially the 1941 movie *The Wolf Man*, starring Lon Chaney, say most sources. In medieval Europe, people got their own hair of the dog that bit them by making a pact with Satan or performing certain rites. The most usual way of becoming a werewolf, according to confessions at medieval "trials," was sorcery, whether intentional or from enchantment by a second party.

Is it possible that people are still trying to produce werewolves by magic spells today? As in former days, I suspect, if there are such people they would probably rather not say.

Magic rites conjuring fearsome goblins and demons are often shown in the movies and on TV shows such as "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," using supposedly ancient texts as spirit cookbooks. There are undoubtedly people who believe black magic can produce tangible results, but this is not

something that could be proved or disproved by any of the evidence we have regarding the Beast of Bray Road. Besides, there will always be skeptics, true believers, and the vast neutral zone in between (also see the section “Cult Connections” in Chapter 18).

A Modern Werewolf in Paris

And yet, when it comes to European werewolves, there is some evidence that something resembling them still lurks on the Continent, whether sprung from black arts or other, unknown means. One of the best artistic depictions I’ve seen is a sketch drawn by a skilled artist who saw what he could only describe as a *loup garou* in France just a few decades ago.

A French artist (whom I’ve not been able to contact in recent years) was working in the Hollywood film industry at the time my proposed screenplay for *The Beast of Bray Road* was in perpetual preproduction. He became acquainted with producer Jack Scanlan in Los Angeles. When he read the accounts of the Wisconsin sightings, the Frenchman exclaimed that he had seen exactly the same thing in France in a remote wilderness area, and he produced a terrifying but beautifully executed drawing that was commissioned by the movie production company for publicity purposes. It shows the same long, wildly shaggy dark hair; the fang-laden snarl; and one malicious eye cast accusingly over its shoulder. The observer fears to intrude.

If this Frenchman’s beast is indeed what long-ago French and German peasants had to contend with, we can begin to understand how they may have overreacted a little.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

VERY HAIRY PEOPLE AND THOSE WITH A BITE

The Hirsute (or Hair Suit)

ALTHOUGH HUMAN BEINGS vary widely in the hair department, from fuzzy-chested and bearded people of European ancestry to very smooth-skinned Asians, the great mass of the human race is generally not endowed with fur that would make us the envy of other mammals. There are, however, a few very unusual people who do look as if they've gone to the dogs, or wolves, in terms of hair coverage. One might call them epidermally gifted.

The unusual genetic disorder known as congenital generalized hypertrichosis is described by the Baylor College of Medicine's Department of Neurology as a very rare x-linked dominant trait seen in a single large Mexican family, although it has been seen other places. Its main symptom is that the afflicted are covered with hair, especially on the face and upper torso, with males most affected. Its effects are in appearance only; it does not cause people to believe they are wolves or give them power to run on all fours or catch Frisbees in their teeth.

In the book *K.I.S.S. Guide to the Unexplained* by Joel Levy, a photo of a family probably suffering from this disorder is headlined: "monstrous diseases." The caption tells us the three men photographed some time in the past were from Mandalay, Myanmar. Long, dark hair flows over their faces and can be seen also on the exposed legs and feet of one of the men. It is admittedly startling to see human eyes peering out from under what looks like a mop of monkey fur.

In 1977, a surprising child was born to astonished parents in China, who gave their son a name that means "shock the world" in Chinese. The little boy was a *mao hai*, or "hairy child" in Chinese tradition, and was

covered with black hair on his entire body, except for his palms, the soles of his feet, and his lips.

Some children are born with a fine, downy covering of hair called a “lanugo,” but this usually soon disappears. The thick hair on little “Shock the World” did not go away, and he is pictured in *The World’s Most Incredible Stories: The Best of Fortean Times* at the age of eight months, grinning happily through his fuzz.

Mexico, in turn, boasts the well-known Gomez family, with four extremely hirsute children born to parents with normal hair distribution. The children, two sets of siblings who were cousins, shared a great-grandmother who also bore hairy children, with as many as fifteen hair-covered progeny credited to her genetic line.

The *Fortean Times* book quotes a Professor Marcus Pembrey as saying that the condition is a “chemical error related to the control of hair growth. It is not a throwback to ancient man, or to animals.” It notes the earliest recorded case dates back to 1556, with a Canary Islands man named Peter Gonzales.

Other sources mention that Gonzales had to suffer the indignity of having the hair on his face curled to keep it out of his eyes. King Henry II of France demanded Gonzales’ presence at his court for the amusement of his courtiers. That turned out to be a stroke of luck for Gonzales, however, as he ended up with a beautiful French wife and a batch of handsome children, three of whom looked just like their father.

Modern science has made some study of this condition on the odd occasions when it does surface. A medical organization called the Southeastern Research Genetics Group released a paper about a young child with this condition on a Web site (see Bibliography for full Web address). The paper said a baby boy had been born to a twenty-seven-year-old woman after a normal pregnancy. “A striking amount of long, dark hair covering most of his body was noted,” said the report. By the age of two months, the baby was considered small for his age and had some facial distortions, including “sunken cheeks, a wide nasal bridge, prominent intraorbital creases, and a large, turned-down mouth.” He also had long eyelashes and good eyesight.

Checked again twenty months later, the child was still covered with hair and was healthy, but he could speak only three words and was not able to walk alone until twenty-two months old. The article was not dated, it but

cited references from as early as 1648, with a paper by V. Aldrovandus titled *Monstrorum Historia*. Other references used were from 1991, so the case had to be fairly recent. It didn't say where the child's family lived.

And, believe it or not, if you really wish to scrutinize your neighbors for signs of werewolfism, check out their arms. A variation of this condition, called "hairy elbow hypertrichosis (HES)" is just what it sounds like: a growth of long hairs from only the elbows. There is a Web site (www.hirsutism.com) that explains this disorder was first reported in 1970, with ten other cases cited since. It appears in young children and is not associated with other medical problems. Presumably, unlike full-blown hypertrichosis, the hairy elbow would be fairly easy to hide with a bit of lather and a good shave.

It's easy to imagine that—especially in more primitive times—a child born covered with long, dark fur might be supposed to represent all kinds of iffy things: mating with animals, magic or supernatural powers, evil spirits, etc. Such a child would probably in many instances have been killed, shunned, or driven out to fend for itself. Might these unfortunate creatures, forced to learn to survive away from civilization, not be the source of many "wild man" sightings?

But there is another possible source of stories about creatures that seemed half human and half animal—the legendary "wild child." These are the so-called feral children who somehow are lost when they are very young and are "raised" or suckled by various wild animals such as wolves or sheep. There seem to be many reported cases from all around the world, some substantiated and others not.

These children, when discovered later by society, may appear to possess animal traits such as eating raw meat and even running on all fours but otherwise may be normal physically. Sometimes they are found to be mentally ill, but it's hard to know whether that was the reason they were originally "set free" or if their illness resulted from years with no human contact.

Still, I highly doubt any children were suckled by she-wolves on Bray Road in Elkhorn, Wisconsin.

The Lycanthropes: Lives in Transition

It's a bit tricky discussing the condition that has come to be known as lycanthropy, described as a belief that one actually has the power to transform into a wolf or werewolf. The reason it is tricky is that many people who say they are lycanthropes insist that they actually do transform themselves physically and that it is no mental disorder.

I have had it explained to me by a self-described lycanthrope, for instance, that the Beast of Bray Road was actually an immature lycanthrope who had not learned to transform well at the time of all the sightings, and that is why he or she was continually allowing itself to be seen on our county highways.

However, definitions of lycanthropy written by mental health professionals say lycanthropes are people who truly believe they can become wolves, but the belief is a delusion. The word *lycanthrope* comes from the Greek *lykos*, meaning wolf (handed down from good King Lycaon; see Introduction), combined with *anthropos*, or man. Wolf-man.

As early as the Renaissance, a medical theorist named Aetius wrote about a disease he called lycanthropia. Also known as “wolves fury,” it did not acknowledge actual physical transformation but listed all the usual symptoms such as howling, disturbing graves (remember St. Coletta's? the mad Gadarene?), and having a haggard appearance, according to the book *Witches, Werewolves, and Wandering Spirits*.

But which camp is right? Either the lycanthropes are delusional or the psychologists are in denial.

Consider the case of Bill Ramsey, described in a book called *Sightings*, published in 1996, spun off from the TV show of the same name (the show that also came to Elkhorn). Ramsey was from southern England, where he had developed an understandably bad reputation due to his unacceptable habit of biting and attacking people uncontrollably. He traveled to Connecticut to seek help from paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren, who had read about him in the tabloids and wanted to help.

Help was something Ramsey desperately needed. His affliction had started when he was nine years old, when he unexpectedly flew into a rage while playing with his toy soldiers outdoors. The young boy snapped a solid wood fence post in two as if it was a twig after he pulled it out of concrete, and he also tore at a wire fence with his teeth. No one was hurt, and, thankfully, there were no more childhood incidents. His family believed the strange behavior was an isolated quirk.

It wasn't until Ramsey was grown, married, and a father of three that he had another attack after dozing one day in a coworker's vehicle. Without warning, he growled and snapped at a friend, biting the man in the leg. In a few years, Ramsey had another incident where his hands actually seemed to form the shape of claws. Even an injected sedative had no effect. The incidents became more frequent, and London tabloids dubbed him "the Werewolf of Southend-on-Sea."

Finally, a ferocious attack on a policeman during which Ramsey kept repeating, "The devil is in me" landed both him and his interior devil in jail. The police officers observed his clawed hand and turned-up lip and reported it made Ramsey look like a "mad dog." Ramsey was soon transferred to a mental hospital.

In America, the Warrens believed Ramsey was not sick but possessed. They arranged an exorcism by a Catholic bishop. Lorraine Warren observed that during the exorcism, Ramsey's neck enlarged, his ears began to "point," and he began to howl. She also said, "Then the hands clawed in such a manner that no human hand could claw like that." Ramsey tried to attack the priest, but it was as if an invisible barrier existed between the two and he was unable to. After the whole ordeal, Ramsey said he felt cured.

In addition to the appearance of the story in *Sightings*, the Warrens wrote their own book about the case, *Werewolf*, published by St. Martin's Press in 1991. In 2000, a Web site called Goofball.com (see Bibliography for full Web address) ran a story entitled "Werewolf in London Nabbed Again." Unfortunately, it did not elaborate, other than to say that Bill Ramsey considered himself a real-life werewolf. I haven't been able to find anything else about him, but it appears from that small article that Ramsey might have fallen off the lycanthropy wagon and back into howling at full moons.

Physically, whatever the true cause, Ramsey would never have been mistaken for anything other than a vicious-looking human even during his fiercest aggression. That makes him an interesting psychological case but probably not the same sort of creature that folks who claim to have seen a werewolf would describe.

Lycanthropes Have Their Say

Transformation-minded people who call themselves lycanthropes would probably have another quarrel with the Ramsey story, taking issue with the notion that they need to be “depossessioned” of anything. And it’s not hard to discover their opinions on the topic.

Like everyone else, these serious-minded “transformers” and their ilk have gone high tech to get their message out. If you type “lycanthropy” into an Internet search engine, you will find all manner of Web sites for this small but vocal community. For starters, there is the site for the Werewolf and Shape Shifter Handbook: Everything You Wanted to Know About Werewolves but Were Afraid to Ask. Or rather, there was that particular site (see Bibliography for full Web address). Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, the main part of the site had been taken off line, which is a risk always inherent in using Web site materials.

Still, when I did my search, some of the pages remained available and were interesting. Its attitude could probably best be described in this sentence from the site: “The countless books and articles which have examined lycanthropy myths from the standpoint of ‘this can’t possibly be true’ are repetitive and boring. It’s much more fun to examine the myths from the standpoint of ‘much of this could be true.’” Yes, the world as we would like it to be is almost always less repetitive and boring than the world as it is.

The site went on to point out that despite what *science* says, there is no real violation of natural law involved in shifting and rearranging the proteins, fats, and other body parts involved in changing from human to wolf, but it admitted that such shifting is no easy task. It examined not only werewolves but were-creatures of all species, asserting that most are really nice and friendly, sort of like household pets that also are friendly but may have a few “disgusting habits.” The site also warns rather ominously that there are more were-creatures around than the average person might think.

I found another female lycanthrope who explained on her site why she and others like her are not usually more forthcoming about their true natures: “This is not a world where it pays to flaunt what we are in front of humans, so the real lycanthropes hide and wait.”

One letter I received at the newspaper from a young man who professed to be a “true” werewolf chided me strongly for not believing in literal werewolves, as he judged from some statements I had made in my original articles. He wrote, “The secret can never be told; the consequences

are sadistic.” The writer advised me to check my public library for literature on medieval lore, “especially certain abandon [sic] castles.”

He continued with investigative advice for me about the Beast of Bray Road: “Lastly, find out how many missing persons reports have been filed in the area over the past 10 to 20 years. He has been there longer than 3 years, I guarantee that! As I read in your most recent article you needn’t worry about him leaving. He is in his territory and it will take something extraordinary to get him out. I warn you.... Just like any other animal, do not corner him. His kind in change still has human thought. He isn’t likely to break the pact unless it is breeched [sic] by man first. To all those whom [sic] laugh at you, ignore it. It will subside in time. But do not assume it off as a hoax. I implore you! Please trust me.”

After the signature, he wrote a few words which I am not sure of because they were in longhand with some ambiguous capital letters, but after the words it read: “Romanian translation: mind your own business for your concern.”

Personally, I leave all people to mind their own business for their own concern. It’s great that we live in a country where all are free to do and believe as they wish as long as they aren’t making innocent people “disappear,” as this writer seems to imply.

Another Web writer describes herself not as a lycanthrope but as a “spiritual therianthrope,” meaning she shifts mentally and spiritually into an animal form that she feels is an inner part of her, changing her personality and demeanor rather than her body. This seems like a much more convenient form of the condition. Who really needs all that fur?

I keep feeling I need to reiterate, however, the notion that the psychological definition of lycanthropy varies considerably from the way those who say they are lycanthropes would describe themselves.

There is another possibility. The book *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits* also discusses modern diagnoses of lycanthropy, including its frequent linkage to a disorder called porphyria. The book describes this as “a rare congenital disorder that is characterized by extreme light sensitivity, clay-colored teeth, and ‘ulcers which destroy cartilage and bone, cause the deformation of the nose, ears, and fingers. Mental aberrations, such as hysteria, manic-depressive psychosis, and delirium’ may also accompany porphyria. With such symptoms, connections can be made between werewolf and vampire cases.”

People who call themselves werewolves will still insist that they do transform, whether in the flesh or in the spirit. But because for most people seeing is believing, I believe the jury will remain out on this one until those claiming to make the physical transformations are willing and able to produce fangs, true claws, and a full coat of fur under laboratory test conditions ... or at least on cable TV.

There actually *was* a cable TV show about purported werewolves, called *Werewolf*, with a werewolf researcher named Dr. Stephen Kaplan as its consultant. In *The Werewolf Book*, author Brad Steiger told how Kaplan set up a “werewolf hotline” for callers who either knew werewolves or were one. They received more than half a million calls. Kaplan met a few who said they themselves were werewolves, and although he never saw one transform, he believed they actually were affected by the full moon, and he noted that they often did have longer canine teeth. Several of the self-professed werewolves threatened Kaplan with violence for saying that werewolves committed violent acts, added Steiger.

Kaplan’s theory is that lycanthropes have a genetic cause, having ancestors who in the far distant past mated with “yeti.” Perhaps if they would just all submit blood samples we could find the W-chromosome and get to the bottom of all this.

Werewolves in Old Wisconsin

There have also been examples of people crying wolf in the Bray Road Beast’s home state, with a few historical claims of European-style werewolves in Wisconsin. I have the staff of TV’s “Inside Edition” to thank for originally bringing these to my attention. They spooked the old accounts out of the state archives when preparing for their television show back in the middle of the original hoopla.

The main story from the archives was told by Mary Burdick and A. O. Barton to historian Charles E. Brown on November 30, 1933. In Dane County, when Wisconsin was still a territory (before 1848), a man named Gross lived with a farmer on Sauk Road in the tiny German community of Springfield Corners. The farmer was wealthy, possessing a treasure in gold, and Gross made a living by teaching dancing.

When the farmer set off to purchase some horses in Madison one day, his neighbors were perplexed after he did not return. His oxen were found

wandering the woods, and finally the farmer was discovered—murdered and robbed—beneath a pile of leaves.

Of course suspicion for the death immediately fell on the farmer's housemate, Gross, who was tried and acquitted because there was no evidence that he committed the crime. Part of the lack of evidence came about, neighbors later whispered, because it was known that Gross was a werewolf and people feared a gruesome reprisal.

There had, it seems, been talk of such a creature in the area. One Springfield Corners woman heard a strange animal noise one day while feeding her chickens. She turned to look so quickly that she fell to the ground and hurt her ankle. While she lay there, she saw the shape of a wolf in the bushes nearby, and simultaneously a sinister human laugh came to her ears as the creature "slunk away."

Another Springfield Corners resident told a family member of Mary Burdick, listed in Brown's archives as Z. N. Burdick, that six of his children had died. It was somehow implied that a werewolf was at fault, and when questioned, the man said he would not risk the life of his last remaining child by speaking of the creature out loud, even though Gross had by then been dead and buried for two years, stating "the grass was still green over his grave."

The little town of Primrose in southwestern Dane County was another place where settlers talked of werewolves in the early days. People would be traveling in a sleigh or wagon when suddenly a wolf or two would appear to run alongside it. The creatures were not considered natural animals because they would disappear in a cloud of dust or mist. The settlers considered this an omen that evil happenings were about to occur to them or to loved ones. And there the recorded tales end.

As a final note, I like the coincidence of the similarity of place names between Springfield Corners, home of the pioneer werewolf, and Spring Prairie in Walworth County, home of the Bray Road Beast. Fields in spring, fertility of the earth, wild men—it all fits in a mythic sort of way.

CHAPTER TWELVE

IT'S A SMALL, SMALL WORLD

ALTHOUGH MANY PEOPLE around southern Wisconsin tend to think of “their” werewolf as some sort of isolated, unique happening, the truth is that were-creature sightings are universal. But I had no idea just how widespread this sort of legend is until I started looking for it. And I’m just one in a long line of researchers of this topic. Were-creatures seemingly inhabit every corner of the world.

Some readers may have been through the “Small, Small World” ride at a Disney theme park, where hundreds of dolls in native costumes from Dutch peasant to Zulu princess “dance,” wave their little arms, and chirp their endless, droning tune as you float past. Well, just picture the same thing but with tiny, robotic werewolves instead of dolls. There are that many variations. I have space to tell of only a few, however.

Werewolf of the Islands

Back in the heyday of the Beast of Bray Road sightings, I received some interesting letters from people who lived far from Walworth County but had their own opinions about the Beast of Bray Road or, better yet, their own stories. One of the most fascinating was from a professor from the University of the Virgin Islands in Saint Thomas.

The U.S. Virgin Islands are part of the island chain known the West Indies, lying between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea east of Puerto Rico. That’s a “fur piece” from Wisconsin, but it does have a connection to the state.

Professor Mary L. Alexander wrote me in July of 1992 that she grew up in Baraboo, Wisconsin, but had been researching werewolf legends from the Virgin Islands since she began teaching there. She recently gave me permission to quote from an article she published in the university’s

February 1992 *Humanities Bulletin*, written before she had heard anything about her home state's werewolf.

In "A Natural History of the West Indian Werewolf," Alexander noted that in the Caribbean, "the werewolf appears to have found an especially fertile ground in which to prosper." For some reason, West Indies werewolves are almost always male and may have traveled here in story form with the Danish and German settlers who migrated to establish plantations.

The idea of werewolves would have been easy to plant among the African slave population "imported" to work the plantations, because their traditions already included a rich heritage of wereanimals such as werelions, werehyenas, and wereleopards. However, because dogs rather than other canines were the largest predators in the islands, the focus in the Indies gravitated to weredogs (very much like the Beast of Bray Road!).

In the West Indies, "sightings usually confirmed a dog or dog-like beast," wrote Alexander, "albeit a dog with uncanny supernatural attributes." Alexander cites St. Thomas scholar and historian J. Antonio Jarvis, who wrote about the Virgin Island werewolves in detail. "Jarvis described werewolves as being larger and more fleet and nimble than the average dog," said Alexander, "since werewolves had to be capable of leaping tall fences and scaling rooftops."

Alexander said that many people of the older generation of West Indians have personal werewolf stories to tell. One woman told Alexander that she was acquainted in her youth with a young man who claimed he was a weredog, able to "transform himself into a dog at certain times." He promised to show himself to her in that form if she, in turn, would promise not to throw stones at him, the usual local treatment for were-creatures.

"Not too many days afterward," said Alexander, "the woman was sitting in her front room with a basket of mending in her lap. Suddenly a strange dog, uncommonly large, materialized at the open door, made 'sweet eye' at her and then with unnatural lightness of step, bounded away over a nearby bank and disappeared into the bush. Later, when she met the gentleman in the market, he gave a detailed account of what she was wearing and into which corners of the room the contents of her sewing basket ended up."

This same weredog had once been suspected of a common West Indies weredog practice: sucking the blood of pregnant women at night and thus

causing their babies to be stillborn. That trait, incidentally, seems related to vampire-type beasts in the Philippines which are called *aswang* and also have a penchant for pregnant women. (Film buffs may recall an indie flick called “Aswang: The Unearthing,” produced by Wisconsin native Barry Poltermann and released to video in July 1994.)

Unlike European werewolves who were usually the outcasts of society, West Indian were-creatures were the alter egos of either the local *obeahman*, or shaman, or of men of great power and prestige in the community. Alexander said that a leading Anguillan politician was said to have escaped during the 1967 rebellion against St. Kitts by shape-shifting. The head of a prominent St. Thomas family was also said to have transformation prowess, as were other community leaders in the area.

As in Europe, the non-shape-shifting population had to devise ways to protect themselves against the weredogs. One method, according to Jarvis, was leaving ninety-nine grains of corn at a crossroads near a weredog’s route of travel. The weredog would be unable to leave the area due to a strange compulsion to hide the hundredth piece of corn, which was inconveniently missing from the pile. “Only when confronted with the illogical task of counting a grain of corn that is not there is the werewolf defeated,” explained Alexander. She related this defense to an ongoing theme that seems to underlie were-creatures—that of the power of the subconscious, less logical mind.

Tales of the Lobizon

More recent sightings in the southern part of the Western Hemisphere have been in Argentina, where the *lobizon*, as it is called in South America, has become a creature feared by rural populations. (This area of the world is also notorious for sightings of the strange *chupacabras*, or goat-sucker, but the *chupacabras* is too different from wolf/dog creatures to include here.)

Also, the *lobizon* should be distinguished from the much larger *ukumar*, described as a “werebear,” which is more often associated with Bigfoot legends than with werewolves due to its amazing twelve-foot-high stature. Sightings of the *ukumar* range in date from 1549 to 1989, according to Brad Steiger’s *The Werewolf Book*.

The *lobizon*, in contrast, is rangier and shorter, with daggerlike claws and a human gait. It is definitely more canine than bearlike. A *lobizon* was

reported in late February 2003 by a garbage dump custodian in Rosario de la Frontera, according to Scott Corrales, author of several books on Fortean (mysterious or paranormal) topics and editor of *Inexplicata: The Journal of the Institute of Hispanic Ufology*.

The custodian, Patricio Salda-o, normally keeps a pack of thirty dogs to help guard his garbage dump and was alarmed late one night when the whole pack began barking. Salda-o said the dogs' source of distress was "that strange hairy animal that people have reported, standing on two legs. It was like an enormous monkey," reported Corrales. Very much like the Beast of Bray Road, the animal Salda-o confronted stared silently back at him for a short time, then "turned on a heel" before sauntering off into the night.

"It was an animal but walked like a man," Salda-o added. It is interesting that the thirty junkyard dogs didn't seem to frighten the creature. Corrales noted that there were also news reports of a colt being dragged away from a nearby farm, mauled, and eaten.

A few years earlier, an even stranger story surfaced out of northern Argentina when seventeen relatives at a family reunion joined forces to beat the tar out of what they thought was a lobizon after it attacked a little dog and then menaced the humans present. The story was reported by Joseph Trainor, editor of *UFO Roundup*, in volume 5 of the publication in an article titled "Wolfman Terrorizes Town in Northern Argentina." The incident is unique because of the large number of simultaneous witnesses as well as the physical interaction.

Family member Jesus Alcides Gomez said he didn't believe in the *lobizon* before this encounter of the nasty kind. When the family members counterattacked, the *lobizon* ended up in the house. The humans cornered it and began pounding it with stones, bricks, and garden hoes until it appeared to give up the ghost. After they dragged it back outside, it sprang up and bounded away "as if we'd inflicted no injury on it."

The family members described the creature as resembling a dog, "with large hanging ears and legs resembling those of a child." The family also called police who examined the scene and collected blood, hair, and fecal samples left by the animal.

Someone else also reported seeing the *lobizon* in the same neighborhood later that evening, reported Trainor. A gas station attendant saw what he believed at first to be a "strange dog" hiding behind one of the

pumps. The attendant observed that its tail was bloody (most likely thanks to the licking it had received at the family reunion from hell) and said it had “long hair, somewhat dark brown in color, and its eyes darted everywhere.” (Note: Trainor thanked Scott Corrales for this story.)

In a story sent to me by author and researcher Nick Redfern, an article by Juan Antonio Abarzúa in *El Tribuno* (Salta, Argentina) from March 7, 2003, titled “In Rosario de la Frontera, police orders [*sic*] ‘Phase Two’ of Search” said local law enforcement agencies had issued “find and capture orders” and sent squads of searchers on foot and horseback to sweep the deep forests surrounding Rosario de la Frontera. The local police chief added that if the creature was found, all efforts would be made to capture it alive.

One can almost see cryptozoologists everywhere sitting with fingers tightly crossed, in hopes that a creature like this will finally be caught and examined. Whether or not the beast is actually found, the story is eerily reminiscent of the French “Beast of Gevaudan” incident that happened centuries earlier.

Scott Corrales also discussed “Paranormal Manimals in Latin America” in an article for *Strange Magazine*. These “manimals” are described as “Sasquatch’s tropical cousin,” the size of humans, sporting long, dark fur and with glowing eyes, sounding again much like the Beast of Bray Road. (Sasquatches are not usually described as human size but much bigger, although there are many other varieties of apemen that are reported to be smaller, such as the Alma of Mongolia.)

One manimal story involved two hairy critters, one five feet tall and one smaller version, seen climbing up a country hillside. A boy on his way to school also saw two similar beings vocalizing to one another. In another location, something five feet tall and hairy raced among some trees in view of witnesses who happened to be worshipping at the site of a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. All of the stories in this article are tied to sightings of UFOs nearby or Marian apparitions.

Now we are treading paranormal water again, but because this is part of what was reported, I can’t just transport interdimensionally around the issue.

Although none of the witnesses in Walworth or Jefferson County claimed to see UFOs in the vicinity of their sightings—much less a hairy creature being led around by alien astronauts or loitering near space

vehicles (even though this area of Wisconsin has no shortage of other UFO sightings)—that seems to be the case in many of these South American sightings. And UFOs have been reported in connection with a goodly number of North American incidents as well.

Leaping from South America to Wisconsin, Corrales does make the point that there were “cultlike activities” and alleged animal mutilations taking place not far from the Bray Road sightings back in the early 1990s (see “Cult Connections” in Chapter 18). Corrales asks, “Could these sacrifices have been part of a black magic ceremony designed to ‘summon’ these parahuman entities into our reality?”

As a dog lover, I really hope not. Although I have learned not to ever rule anything out entirely, I have to say I’m not too keen on this theory. And playing the werewolf’s advocate, I think it necessary to say that even if the pet disappearances and creature manifestations did seem to occur in roughly the same area, that does not prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

It just makes everything a little spookier.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS: SHAPE-SHIFTING AND MORE

MANY CULTURES believe that animal forms can be manifested by the conjurer's arts, and the North American Indian peoples certainly rank among them. Although their traditions and legends might logically seem to belong with stories of the South American *lobizon* and *ukumar* from the previous chapter, I decided to keep the North American indigenous shape-shifters under their own heading for several reasons.

For one thing, their stories are so numerous that I can hardly do justice to them in the few examples I have room to include here. I hope that some token samples can at least hint at the complex and sacred relationship between human and animal in the Native American world.

Also, these shape-shifter stories are very often cited not only by paranormal researchers but by writers for movies and suspense novels as convenient *raison d'être* for the existence of modern werewolves or other creatures in the United States. The short-lived TV series *Wolf Lake*, which debuted in fall 2002, used the idea of shape-shifting Amerindians called "Skinwalkers" in a series about teen wolves shepherded by a wise high school biology teacher of Native American descent.

And when it comes to using the irresistible imagery of Amerindian lore, I confess I'm not exempt. I had used a Cree story about similar transformers called "skin changers" in my third rewrite for *The Beast of Bray Road* movie before the *Wolf Lake* series debuted.

Changing Skins and Walking in Them

I found the story of the skin changer on a Web site called Camlyn's Haven for Pagan Elders (which has since moved from its original address).

“The Skin Changer’s Heart” was adapted from a traditional Cree tale by a Native American named Saquuiyona or One Bear. It is a Montagnais legend about the last of the skin changers, a “wicked, evil” boy named Maskanawidj. Interestingly, the Great Spirit Windigo made Maskanawidj a skin changer in order to punish him. Maskanawidj’s fate was to live as a human in fall, summer, and spring, but in winter he had to wear a wolf skin and mask and prey on his own people. It is very much like the old Greek tale of King Lycaon.

Tales of the skinwalker are a little better known than that of the skin changer. One example of a skinwalker is the Navajo *yenaldlooshi*, a witch or sorcerer who earns his name by wearing a coyote skin on his travels. *Yenaldlooshi* is not a kindly figure: killing close relatives, performing bodily functions on sacred sand paintings, practicing cannibalism, collecting human heads, and making people sick are some of his less than divine occupations. However, Brad Steiger, in *The Werewolf Book*, notes that the main reason Navajo shamans take skinwalker form is that they can travel much more quickly in that shape. And according to the *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, sometimes it is a coyote who makes a skinwalker by offering to trade skins, or appearances, with a human.

The gist of it all is that these very gripping tales of Amerindian man-beasts exist and that everyone, including me, loves to plug mystery sightings into their creature-shaped sockets. They offer a very handy and satisfying explanation for the inexplicable.

Could Wisconsin’s Beast be the manifestation of a Native American shape-shifter? Well, most of our local tribal nations, such as the Ojibwa, Ottawa, Sauk, Fox, Ho-Chunk, and Potawatomi, were all forcibly removed from these southern Wisconsin counties before the turn of the twentieth century. Logically, their shamans and associated spirit beings would have gone with them. But descendents of these people survive, and many live here again. Powwows are held in Lake Geneva and Whitewater regularly.

I have no idea if the old traditions are still being observed in the same way the stories tell, or even if it is possible for the story-creatures of these tribes to still somehow stalk the Wisconsin woods. That depends on what a person believes. But here are a few examples of related lore.

I’ve already mentioned the Windigo and Hairy Hearts (see Chapter 9). The Windigo stories did incorporate some degree of shape-shifting, as a human-turned-cannibal was made literally monstrous by his greed, but the

transformed creature was not really wolflike, or even like any other recognizable animal.

A “Wendigo” (their spelling) was said to haunt the small town of Roseau, Minnesota, from the 1800s to the 1920s, according to *The National Directory of Haunted Places*, but what people saw hardly would have been mistaken for a werewolf or even Bigfoot. Area residents described an apparition, “fifteen feet tall with a shining star on its forehead,” and it came as a harbinger of sudden death in the community.

Hairy Heart Beings, on the other hand, were perceived as a separate but corporeal species, from what I can find about them, and while marriageable with humans, they didn’t ever come from transformed humans.

Or, to throw out one final possibility, maybe the Hairy Hearts and Windigo were separate story manifestations of the same flesh and blood being observed by different Indian nations!

From Animal to Human and Back Again

But there are many other types of creatures to consider. Native American stories begin by assuming that animals and humans were once much more familiar with each other and that the boundaries among species were not as well defined as they are now. The origin of the beaver, for instance, is explained by Northeast Algonquian tribes in a story of a human family that drowned while crossing a river. The parents and children were all then transformed into the first family of beavers, according to the *Dictionary of Native American Mythology* by Sam Gill and Irene Sullivan.

This dictionary, a handy resource for abbreviated versions of a great variety of Northern Amerindian religious elements, also tells the Pawnee story of Buffalo Woman, who conceived a child with a Pawnee warrior while in human form and then gave birth to a buffalo calf and turned back into a buffalo. It is a tale that honors the buffalo for its ability to provide necessary food and coverings to man, even as the tale suggests the animal’s interchangeability with humans.

Another legend is the White Buffalo Maiden of the Lakota people, who appears to them as a woman to present the tribe members with their first ceremonial pipe. Later, she changes into a white buffalo and gallops away. According to Gill and Sullivan, “White Buffalo Maiden made humans

relatives of all four-legged and fur-bearing beings.” (This story has gained great prominence in recent years with the birth of the famous white buffalo calf, Miracle, in Janesville, Wisconsin, in 1994.)

Monsters and Their Slayers

Monsters of all types and sizes are another element embedded in Native American story teachings. The Navajo assert that at one time, a variety of monsters begotten from the union of “Sun” with human women made life on earth very hazardous for people, and of course something had to be done about it. (I can’t help but think of Genesis 6:4, which says: “The sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them.” The results of those preflood unions were the *Nephilim*, people of great size and strength, or giants, who were also fated to be removed from the earth.)

The Navajo tale, say Gill and Sullivan, continues when one of Sun’s twin warrior sons born to Sun’s wife, Changing Woman, is named Monster Slayer. Monster Slayer destroys many of the Sun-begotten earth monsters to make life easier for humans. The fascinating list of Monster Slayer’s conquests includes “Horned Monster,” “Rock Monster Eagle,” “Eye Killers,” and “Kicks-Off-Rocks.” So while there are animals with whom Native Americans feel a sacred connection, there were also “monsters” to be removed in order for humanity to thrive.

Those monsters could have been more than legend, too. The North American continent teemed with gigantic, carnivorous mammals such as saber-toothed tigers and giant sloths until as recently as eleven thousand years ago. Although the Navajo story of Monster Slayer doubtless has many other layers of meaning, which I wouldn’t even pretend to guess at, perhaps it also is rooted in this zoological truth handed down from remote ancestors.

As shown by the Buffalo Woman tales, gender is not a barrier to shape-shifting in Amerindian legend. The Eskimo tell of Qisaruatsiaq, a woman who transforms into a wolf. *The Dictionary of Native American Mythology* shows a photo of a beautiful Eskimo carving of Qisaruatsiaq elegantly loping along in a wolf body with her human head intact.

This useful book also notes that Native American traditions include witches and sorcerers, who are said to be different from generally benevolent medicine people and shamans. Witches and sorcerers, it says,

are those who use power “to socially malevolent ends.” The Tlingit title for “witch,” for instance, is “Master of Sickness.”

Following this line of *very* speculative thought, going along with the belief that Bigfoot and werewolf sightings are related to indigenous legend, what might possibly induce Native American spirits to manifest as tall, hairy, wolf-dogs around Walworth and Jefferson Counties?

Some have suggested the answer may lie in the vast number of desecrated, bulldozed, and otherwise destroyed burial and effigy mounds and Native American burial grounds here. The region is richly blessed in lakes, and around most of the lakeshores there used to exist hundreds of conical burial mounds. There were also hundreds of the animal effigy mounds—turtles, lizards, water panthers, and thunderbirds—unique in all the world to the territory mostly contained in and near the state of Wisconsin.

Wait staff and night security guards at Lake Lawn Resort in Delavan, which was literally built over dozens of mounds, say that at night, especially when few guests are at the hotel, wisps of spirit beings can be seen floating over the old mound areas, and the mutterings of unintelligible voices are heard around the grounds. The sounds have often forced night guards to initiate security checks that never turn up a living culprit. Also, if you recall the story of the night watchman at St. Colletta in 1936, it was upon an old burial mound that he saw the hairy creature.

Figures of revenge? Guardianship? Ancestor tomb reclamation? All have been suggested. But in looking over available Amerindian shape-shifting literature, it is impossible to overlook those classic volumes of (mostly) fictional and always controversial adventures by Carlos Castaneda about his apprenticeship with a Yaqui Indian sorcerer, don Juan.

The Sorcerer’s Eye

In the books, don Juan taught Castaneda about the traditional *nagual*, or inner spirit being, involved in such things as shifting one’s shape. Coyotes or doglike beings are common forms taken by southwest Indian shape-shifters.

In checking over a few dusty Castaneda volumes, I couldn’t help seeing an interesting connection, for what it may be worth, between another

of don Juan's teachings and almost all the Beast of Bray Road sightings—the sorcerer's eye.

Almost all the witnesses I have talked to—and even those whose stories I've heard secondhand—have been adamant that the thing that frightened them the most, more than the creature's strange looks, shaggy hair, or large size, was the uncanny, almost insolent stare that it returned to its human observer. Most of the witnesses were not just frightened but deeply shaken, and that's one reason most of them don't talk about the experience to anyone outside a few trusted family members until some time has passed. Even then, they are still at some loss to explain their reaction to seeing the creature.

Consider this passage from *Tales of Power*, by Castaneda, when don Juan explains how he forcefully captured Castaneda's attention the day they met. Castaneda remarks that he could still remember don Juan staring at him. Don Juan tells how he did it: "The gaze on the right eye is not a stare," he said. "It's rather a forceful grabbing that one does through the eye of the other person...."

Not only did don Juan have the capacity to mesmerize through eye contact, he had demonstrated on other occasions his ability to shift into animal form. Don Juan attempted to "capture" Castaneda's attention, he said, because of the spiritual qualities he recognized in Castaneda.

The intense gaze exhibited by the Bray Road Beast to all of its witnesses has always seemed like something more than accidental surprise to me. It's as if the creature is purposefully seeking eye contact. Is there some reason for the creature's "forceful grabbing" through its eyes?

The "evil eye" is a folk legend that exists in African, European, and Middle Eastern traditions and was imported to the New World, too. People in Turkey are famous for wearing blue stones that represent eyeballs to ward off curses that may come from someone giving them the evil eye, which may be related to covetousness rather than sorcery.

The oldest words for evil eye in many ancient languages such as Hebrew mean something like "over-looking" or gazing too long. And if you remember the tale of the St. Thomas were-dog, the woman who saw it said it made "sweet eye" at her.

Although it has never physically hurt a human being to my knowledge, the Bray Road Beast (as well as the Michigan Dogman) appears to be a master of the kind of look that would, in more traditional cultures, be called

the “evil eye.” Whether the creature’s unnerving gaze actually is something like the evil eye of legend or just the natural stare that signifies aggression in predatory animals is another aspect in the natural/supernatural debate about the Beast of Bray Road. (I know some people say there is no difference between the natural and supernatural, it’s all in our perception, but that’s a whole other philosophical ball of wax.) There is also a good argument for the natural wolf gaze, however.

R. D. Lawrence, in his book *In Praise of Wolves*, had some fascinating paragraphs about a face-to-face encounter with the leader of a wolf pack, staring deeply into its “almond-shaped, yellow-amber eyes.” Lawrence continued, “And as always happens when I look deeply into the eyes of a wolf, I found myself drawn into another realm, an altogether different plane of mystical dimension far removed from the material norms that today mold the affairs of mankind. Hypnotically impelling, Shawano’s glowing eyes probed into my being, reading me, looking for weakness, for fear, for aggression—above all for honesty.”

Natural or supernatural, that stare is not something I’d want to see in a dark cornfield. And while I’m still quite reluctant to officially pin a paranormal tag on these sightings, I have one more observation to make for those inclined to go with this line of thinking. The idea of the sorcerer’s stare implies intelligent intent on the part of the gazer (not necessarily true with evil eye traditions, however). Maybe—and I can hear all the woo-woo alarms going off right now—that is why no one who has purposely gone seeking the creature has succeeded. The creature is seen when it wants to be seen, by those whom it wishes to see it, and only on its own terms. It gives the hairy eyeball to whom it will.

But that’s only one more theory.

Keel’s “Mimics”

Not everyone who accepts the idea of shape-shifters thinks they are of earthly origin. Scott Corrales puts forth this idea, among other possibilities, when he asks in an article entitled “Shapeshifters and Other Metamorphs,” published in *The Excluded Middle* in 1996: “Can it be that shape-shifters are not human at all, but rather another form of intelligent life capable of imitating not only humans, but animals as well?”

Creatures following this concept, he explains, were called “mimics” by pioneer Fortean researcher John A. Keel. Keel’s idea is that there may be inhuman creatures who have the ability to re-form themselves in imitation of humans. Only of course they don’t get things exactly right, just close, like the bug alien in the “Edgar suit” in the movie *Men in Black*. In many ways, that sounds exactly how many mysterious beasts in Native American legend behave. They change and adapt according to circumstance, appearing to whom they will and often reflecting important truths about the observing tribe in their appearance and actions.

To paraphrase Walt Kelly’s Pogo, “We have met the *nagual*, and he is a dimly reflected mirror image of us!”

PART THREE

**JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT
WAS SAFE TO GO BACK:
THE SAGA CONTINUES**

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH
THE WOODS: MORE SIGHTINGS**

Out of the Lauderdale Woods

NOT ALL OF the southeastern Wisconsin sightings were made in spooky surroundings on desolate roads. An Elkhorn woman I know pretty well—I'll call her Sandy Doe because she would prefer to stay anonymous—confessed to me that she had a frightening experience with a Bray Road-ish creature in her own driveway. At the time, she was living in a subdivision on the east side of Lauderdale Lakes, about eight miles north of Elkhorn. The Lauderdale area is on the fringe of the Kettle Moraine forest and was the site of many burial mounds, most of which met the farmer's plow or developer's bulldozer.

One late afternoon in November 1995, she and her husband were out in their yard hanging up Christmas lights. Their home was in a "woody" but not isolated area; neighbors lived nearby. The house and the subdivision were not on the shore but close to the lake.

Doe's husband had gone inside the garage, and she was still out in the driveway when a massive, doglike creature with dark, shaggy fur walked out of the woods on four legs and began coming toward her steadily, its eyes focused intently on her. The creature did not seem afraid, but Doe was.

Although she had lived in rural areas all her life, this was something different, she said, from a normal stray dog.



Author's interpretation of a devil monkey.

As she began backing away slowly, she yelled for her husband, who came out of the garage brandishing a big stick. The animal, which Doe described as “much larger than a dog but having a German shepherd-type head,” reluctantly turned and went back to the woods.

The couple's teenage son witnessed the whole thing from the bathroom window inside the house. None of them knew what to call the creature they saw, or even what to say about it, nor could they explain exactly why it was so frightening. Doe told me that after that incident she was afraid to go outside by herself at twilight or at night. They moved not many years after.

“I Thought I Was Lunch”

Three years later, in 1998, another woman was threatened by a fearsome canine creature. Jessica Anderson, a young mother of three who also lived in a lake community, told her story on the SCI FI Channel’s new “In Search Of ...” series (see Chapter 15). She had accidentally come across copies of some of my old newspaper articles on Richard Hendricks’ Weird Wisconsin Web site and wrote him; he put me in touch with her.

Anderson had recently given birth to her youngest child and was resting at the home of her in-laws in Williams Bay, a community situated on Geneva Lake. The house was a split-level, she said, with windows overlooking the backyard where a path led through a densely wooded area to the lakeshore.

Anderson was never comfortable with that path or the backyard, she told me, and always kept a close eye on her children when they were out playing. It was just a gut feeling she had that something out there wasn’t right.

The day of her sighting, she had taken pain medication for recent surgery, but nothing strong enough to cause hallucinations or delusions. She was lying down in a bedroom on the lower level, with a window that was about even with the ground, when she heard a scratching sound. She looked up, and there, to her horror, was a wolflike face with large fangs pressed up against the glass as if the creature was trying to get in. “I thought I was lunch,” Anderson quipped.

Because of the position of the window, she was not able to see the creature’s whole body, so it was hard to estimate its overall size. She just had the impression that it was very large and that it had a ferocious desire to get at her. She also noted long claws. She said she did not think that what she saw was a supernatural being. This was the only time she saw the creature, despite all her unease at that location.

Her in-laws’ home was located very near a place on Geneva Lake called Conference Point, which has been the focus of several area Native American legends. The entire shoreline of the lake is girded by a walkable path, so anyone can stroll into this area, past what is now a Bible camp’s grounds. The lake is at its deepest opposite this point, and the Potawatomi once said the legendary thunderbird was sighted there. Nearby was the home of Potawatomi Chief Big Foot (named for his moccasin size, not any

relation to hairy creatures), who gave his moniker to various places in the surrounding community.

Conference Point is also the place where author Gerald Lishka saw a shining figure of an ancient medicine man rise over the lake waters one night while Lishka was attending the Bible camp as a young man. He wrote about his life-changing experience in the book *Darkness Is Light Enough*.

Numerous Native Americans made their camps along Geneva Lake over the millennia, and its shores are dotted with the remains of many burial mounds. Again, the area seems to be one that the original inhabitants regarded as “a place of power,” and one that modern writers call a spiritual “window area,” or a place where many otherworldly happenings seem to merge.

If you walk that lakeshore path in summer, take care to look behind you frequently. With all the tourists, it is also a place of “fast-moving bicycleness.”

Hebron: The Wee Hour Prowler and Reluctant Witnesses

One of the most recent sighting accounts comes from Hebron, a tiny community north of Whitewater. It happened in February 2002, when two men who may have been leaving a bar saw a dark, giant, doglike animal padding silently through the town. They told this to a friend who contacted me, but the men would not agree to talk to me themselves.

This is common. I have a list of such people. There was Brad from Waukesha, who told some relatives that are close friends of my family that he saw exactly what Lori Endrizzi saw standing by a roadside near Waukesha County. I don't have a date, but it was fairly early in the sightings commotion, probably around 1992.

I also would have loved to have talked to the two women who saw a hairy biped standing near the entrance to the Geneva National golf course, off Highway 50, between Williams Bay and Lake Geneva, but I was never able to contact them. The women told someone I know that the lower part of the creature's body was shaped like a deer, which sounded strange at the time but now is something I've heard other places. This was probably around 1995.

A man who lives near LaGrange in northern Walworth County saw a large, hairy creature that frightened him so much, he bought two large

German shepherds for protection. He told a neighbor, who told me, but he won't go on the record or give more details of his sighting.

In the late 1980s, the daughter of a local orchard owner was walking with her kids down Bray Road when she saw something running after a deer ... on two legs! It was dark, hairy, and keeping up with the deer. She preferred not to talk about it.

I wonder how many others there are like these people who never even told a relative or friend. As I like to remind everyone who has had such an experience, it's never too late to share. It could be comforting; if all these witnesses ever wanted to get together, they could make one heck of a support group.

But one more thing about the creature in tiny Hebron: some people think that similarly named geographical locations are no accident but serve some cosmic or otherwise undefinable purpose. Remember the connection between Springfield Corners in Dane County, home of the pioneer werewolf, and Springfield in Walworth County, right next to Bray Road?

In what I think could be a serious contender for the Obscure Synchronistic Reference of the Year Award, I offer the following background on the original city of Hebron, located in the south of Old Testament Judah. The Biblical Hebron was the site of a well-known oracle, or divining spirit. But it gets better.

Robert K. G. Temple (again synchronistically named with his subject matter) devoted an entire appendix in his book *The Sirius Mystery* (mentioned in Chapter 10) to explaining the historic and legendary origins of the Hebron shrine (the Dogon). The Appendix ends with this morsel: "We should note, with a minimum of surprise, that the guardian tribe of the shrine of Hebron, the Calebites, were 'Dog-men.' Dogs are guardians, and preserve the secrets of the Dog Star Sirius."

I highly doubt that the good settlers of Wisconsin's Hebron intended to invoke the spirits of ancient dogmen guardians when they named their town. But it's strange how even this—the briefest, most mundane of the Wisconsin werewolf sightings—has at least a tenuous connection to the rest of the body of lore. And maybe Hebron does have such a guardian.

If those two guys from Hebron ever come forward, I'll be sure to ask them.

The Bark River Creature: Shore Lunch?

There are also people who have died without telling their stories to the world, like Ronald Nixon of Walworth, near the southern border of Walworth County. I add his tale to this section because it was not that far from Hebron, on the shores of the Bark River, that Nixon saw something that changed his fishing habits forever. Luckily he told a close relative, who told me about it ten years after his death.

Nixon was an avid fisherman and was angling for catfish one early summer Saturday, sometime around 1980. The Bark River winds to the east from Fort Atkinson, running north of Whitewater and just northwest of the Kettle Moraine. “You get the nice channel ‘cats’ up there,” explained Nixon’s relative.

Sitting alone in his boat, Nixon was using typical “stinky cheese” bait for his intended catch. Suddenly, a movement on the shore caught his eye. There he saw a dark figure, “big and hairy all over, hunched over and hulking by the weeds.” Nixon strained his eyes but wasn’t close enough to see any details, and when it realized it was being observed, the “thing” melted back into the shadows. Nixon also described it as “darkish-like,” according to his relative, and probably for lack of a better term because he couldn’t see facial details, he decided it must be a “Yeti.”

“He came home and seemed nervous,” continued his relative. “He was a little agitated. He said he wasn’t going fishing alone anymore.” And Nixon didn’t.

Many people use the term “Yeti” interchangeably with “Bigfoot” or “Sasquatch” even though it refers to a Himalayan creature. Nixon’s beast, though, sounds similar in height and action to the Brichta creature, which was sighted on Highway 106, very close to Fort Atkinson.

The creature Brichta saw was also anthropoid or manlike in body, but it had a definite canine head. Nixon could not see the head of the Bark River creature well, just the dark shape of its body, so we still could be talking about the same manimal, even if the sightings were about ten years apart. (Earlier, I included the rural Delavan man’s sighting, which he insisted was a “Bigfoot,” although he also did not have a clear look at the head.)

On the other hand, it is possible that what witnesses interpreted as a doglike head was actually something else. Baboons, although they are monkeys, not apes, have sometimes been suggested to me as a solution to

the canine head conundrum, because their longer muzzle makes them look doglike. To me, it just points out how similar the heads of mammals can be, at a glance. Doglike merges into monkeylike and on into catlike with surprising ease, especially when seen in the dark.

And when drawing conclusions about which species each sighting most resembles, there is one truth I have to keep repeating: it cannot be proved that everyone who saw an oversized hairy creature around here was seeing the same thing. The sightings may have been near one another and within a reasonably close time frame, but that doesn't mean everyone saw the same distinct entity. It seems *likely* that would be so, but "likely" doesn't count even in horseshoes.

To throw a complete primate wrench into the whole description mess, consider the very strange sightings that an Internet reader from Appleton, Wisconsin (about a two-hour drive north from Elkhorn), told me about.

The Thing That Bit Appleton

In December 2001, a woman named Patti Gill e-mailed me to say, "Hello, I was browsing this morning looking for something altogether different than what I found. It got me so upset I had to call my sister and tell her while she was on her way to work. This Beast of Bray Road thing you are describing is I believe the same thing that was in Appleton, Wisconsin, right around 1958–1968." That certainly got my attention.

Gill was born in 1948 in Appleton, which lies in the heart of Wisconsin in the Fox River Valley and is famous for its paper mills. She lived there until she was twelve years old, near Appleton West High School, off the corner of Winnebago and Gillette Streets.

When Gill was nine or ten, she came down with rheumatic fever and had to stay home in bed. One summer night, she and her brother and mother were busy getting ready for bed. Gill had to be carried to her bedroom, which faced the backyard. No sooner had her mother left the room than Gill froze and heard what she called, "the most God awful sound." It seemed to be coming from beyond their backyard and "sounded like a growl, snarl, slobber all mixed into one."

When Gill yelled, her mother told her she had heard it, too. Both listened in Gill's bedroom as the horrible sound approached the rear of their house. "We heard it come over the fence in the back and come close," said

Gill. “It was growling, snarling, and making slobbering noises the whole time. It clearly made sounds that could be likened to what sound effects are made in a werewolf movie.”

The next thing they knew, they could hear it trying to rip the screen door off at the back of the house. That’s when Gill’s mother began to get frightened, Gill said, and ran to shut all the inside doors and windows. “This thing, whatever it was, scratched and banged on the back of the house for some time. It finally went over the side fence and away,” said Gill.

But that wasn’t the end of it. The next time, it attacked the house of Gill’s elderly neighbor lady, trying to claw the window open. The Gill family and the neighbor’s upstairs tenants all heard her scream and could also hear the now-familiar “growl, snarl, and slobber.” It ripped the woman’s screen before leaving.

By the next summer, Gill had recovered from her illness, but her enjoyment of summer vacation would still be marred by the nocturnal visits of the unknown creature. The next time, her father was home when Gill heard the awful sounds outside her bedroom window. She remembers her neighbor next door yelled that she heard it, too, and then her father ran outside armed with a pistol. It had jumped a fence and found its way into the neighbor’s garage where it could still be heard. The family called the police, said Gill, but the police were as afraid as everyone else to go inside the garage. Before long, they heard it exit, presumably out a window, and it ran across the fields around the high school.

Gill’s father told the police he wanted to set bear traps in his yard, but he was politely warned against it. “So after that, the whole summer we kept the loaded pistol in the house,” said Gill.

Many times, she said, they would awake to find a crushed area “large enough for a deer or a bear” in the grass next to the propane tank, and they assumed the creature had chosen their house to bunk against. (As in the Brichta sightings, I have to note the grass bed is common to Bigfoot sightings, according to author Jay Rath.) The discomfiting conclusion was that the creature was lurking about every night. Her older sister, a confirmed skeptic on the topic of the creature, found that out the hard way one evening.

The sister had been on a date, said Gill, and she and her mother were waiting up for the sister. They sat nervously as the sister and her boyfriend kissed good night by the curb, and finally Gill’s mother yelled, “It’s out

here; run or stay in the car!” Probably thinking it was a ploy to get her away from her boyfriend, the unbelieving sister took her time, said Gill. Finally, as she began to make her way to the house, the creature began growling and snarling just out of sight, next to the corner of the house. She froze in fear, and her heroic boyfriend rushed after her and hustled her inside before she became dead beastie meat.

Gill remembers incidents happening to other people before she moved from Appleton in 1960. A friend of hers in junior high school told Gill she and her boyfriend were necking in a car in front of her house on Winnebago Street “when something large, hairy, and very strong jumped on top of the car and snarled and rocked the car for over half an hour.” The girl’s parents were not home, so there was no one to rescue her for the terrifying duration.

Another time, Gill was brave enough to camp out in the backyard of a friend who lived about five blocks away on Lynwood Street. They heard a strange growl, and the girl’s dog began to cry and whine, begging to go in the house. The girls beat a hasty retreat into the house.

She also remembers an article in the *Appleton Post Crescent* about a woman on Lynwood who was taking clothes off the line outside after dark one night, when something snarling, growling, very large, and hairy tried to crawl over her six-foot privacy fence.

Gill’s brother didn’t escape unscathed, either, and was also the victim of a necking interruption after the car he and his girlfriend were parking in was attacked by what he described as something looking like “a guy in a gorilla suit.” He jumped on the car, said Gill’s brother, “and shook the ... out of it. He was pretty strong, made some nasty noises, and smelled pretty bad.”

Gill later met a man who had lived in Appleton all his life and also affirmed hearing of “the monster.” “I know it had most of our neighborhood scared willy-nilly,” she added. “I still cannot to this day watch anything associated with a werewolf or Bigfoot or anything else that smells, snarls, or growls.”

Gill said although there was much speculation about what the creature was, it was never really resolved. It seems no one had a clear look at the creature; it either managed to stay hidden or moved so fast it was almost a blur. Even attacking the cars, it was only partially visible to those inside. It certainly seemed sneaky enough to be a werewolf.

Or was there a more mundane explanation? Based on fragments from all the Appleton witnesses, it seems that their creature evidently was something nocturnal with a wide range of aggressive vocalizations (or a bad case of bronchitis). It was larger than a dog, evidently, if it could rock a car and if it left a crushed grass bed the size of a deer or bear. Very hairy was another description, but alas, there is no clue as to whether the head was canine, feline, or closer to an ape—or human, for that matter. Then there is the smell, a common complaint of Bigfoot sighters. But this creature just doesn't seem large enough for a Bigfoot, and residential Appleton doesn't fill the bill for Bigfoot terrain. A seven- to ten-foot Bigfoot would also have towered over a six-foot privacy fence.

A “mystery creature” that fits the evidence better is the “devil monkey,” described in Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe's *Field Guide to Bigfoot* as a kind of giant baboon that moves by leaping; has large, flat feet and pointed ears; and is about three to four feet tall. One was sighted in Dunkinsville, Ohio, in 1997, and Coleman said he and researcher Mark Hall have taken reports of this creature for almost thirty years.

Could it have been a “guy in a gorilla suit?” It seems unlikely a human would continue to prowl a neighborhood knowing people were keeping loaded pistols ready, or that a prankster would keep it up over several years or sleep curled up by a propane tank night after night. Come to think of it, I'm not sure why anything else would sleep curled up next to a propane tank, either, but then we are dealing with mystery here.

Wolverines have been suggested as one possibility; they are native to the state and could exist on garbage can leavings. Their fur is dark, thick, and long, and they could certainly rip open a window screen with their long, curved claws. They make snuffling, growling vocalizations and are famous for their fierce and pugnacious personalities. But a wolverine would not leave a bed as big as a deer, and I suspect it would have a very hard time rocking a car. It's ludicrous to imagine a two-and-a-half- to four-foot-long wolverine even *trying* to attack a car. Biting the tires, maybe.

That leaves a wolf, coyote, dog, cougar, or bear for other suspects. Wolves and coyotes hardly seem large or hairy enough. There are dogs larger and hairier than wolves, and it's easier to think of a stray dog “adopting” a house and neighborhood than it would be to imagine a wolf or coyote doing that. But a dog would be likely to show itself at some point, I

think. And the sounds made by a growling dog would probably be quickly identified.

Bear? It wouldn't be impossible for a bear to roam as far south as Appleton, and a black bear might hang around a neighborhood if the garbage pickings were handy enough. Black bears also growl, snuffle, and snort. I think there is a possibility, but it seems likely someone would have spotted it in all that time.

Cougars seem less likely. The vocalization doesn't fit, and cougars are sleek, not dark and very hairy. These cats like to spring at prey, but no one ever described any springing action. Then again, maybe everyone was just lucky.

Black panthers—probably really dark-colored cougars that *do* exist—have been sighted around the Midwest at various times, though no one can figure out why. But even though panthers are dark, they aren't super-hairy. Could a panther rock a car? Well, it could if it was big enough.

Pyramid Power and the Beast of Corncob Lane

Consider this story that hasn't been printed anywhere before, told to me recently by the brother of a local bookstore owner. Richard Moe, now an employee of the United States Air Force living in Missouri, hadn't told anyone this story, in fact, for fear of ridicule ... and for fear of what he saw. His brother coaxed him into contributing it to this book.

This happened a few years after the Appleton flap began, in 1964, and several hours south in Wadsworth, Illinois. Tiny Wadsworth lies not far from the Wisconsin border, near Gurnee, which is now most famous for its giant shopping mall and the Great America amusement park. But it's Wadsworth that boasts the most interesting attraction: a giant house built to replicate the pyramid in Giza, Egypt!

The house is written about in *The National Directory of Haunted Places*, by Dennis William Hauck. A one-hundredth scale model of the Great Pyramid, it was built by a man named James Onan and is said to be the site of many strange happenings. It contains replicas of King Tutankhamen's gold chariot and coffin lid, among other items related to ancient Egypt. It is said to be the largest gold-plated building in the world.

Weirdness began cropping up as soon as bulldozers started digging and a pure spring of bubbling mineral water burst forth. It revealed a big vein of

pure gold, the only one ever recorded in Illinois. And as in Alfred Hitchcock's movie "The Birds," massive flocks of blackbirds swooped upon visitors at the north entrance in 1986. According to Hauck, this phenomenon duplicated a legend about the north entrance to the Giza pyramid. So we already have high strangeness in the immediate area, for those following the paranormal thread.

In 1964, before the time of the pyramid, Wadsworth was "just a small farm town," said Moe, "with some factories that employed almost everyone except the farmers." The spring and the gold were already there, but no one knew about them yet.

One of Moe's favorite spots was an old gravel road where area teens gathered to park. "It was called 'Corncob' by all of us," said Moe, "because it ran right between two cornfields that stretched as far as the eye could see." The five-mile stretch of gravel eventually ran into a blacktop road.

Moe found himself out there with his girlfriend in his oh, so classic '56 Chevy one clear autumn night, with a big harvest moon lighting the sky and ten-foot cornstalks providing plenty of privacy. It's important to note that this car was no tin can. "My Chevy was a work of art, at least to me," said Moe. "I had a big block V-8 with two huge gas-sucking Holly carbs mounted on a competition intake manifold that did nothing but scream! I had a whole glove box full of tickets to prove it."

He and his girlfriend were well hidden in a little opening between corn rows just off the road, and both of them were, ahem, somehow on the passenger side in the front seat. "The windows were all rolled up except the wing vents on the front doors," he remembered, "which I thought would let some steam out but actually did not help."

The steam turned out to be the least of Moe's worries. Suddenly spoiling the romantic mood was a strong odor that permeated the car. Moe described it as a "sulfur smell, or strong urine maybe, and we both wondered where it was coming from since there was no one around but us.

"All of a sudden the car shook, or quivered maybe," Moe continued, "like when a semi passes you on the freeway. There was no wind, as the tips of the corn silks didn't move. We kind of got scared and sort of sat back up on the seat. Something had rocked that Chevy, something unnatural."

Next, Moe and his girlfriend heard something rubbing on the passenger side next to them, "or a scraping of some sort." Suddenly a huge, furry black paw slapped the wing vent shut. "Then another paw came up on the

rear small window, the one behind the window that rolled down; this window did not go down on '56 Chevys," said Moe. "This thing had to have an arm span of ten feet at least." Moe peered through the steamy windows, catching a glimpse of something he would never forget.

"Then the last and final thing I seen was two short cropped ears, a bushy black furry head, and just a glimpse of bright yellow eyes. This is all I needed to see! I slid across the seat and fired up the Chevy and backed out of there, hit the corn on the other side of the road, put it in low, and held that gas pedal to the floor for at least half a mile, mud flying everywhere! We did not look back, did not go back, and were silent for about an hour riding around and trying to quit shaking." Moe said he thought the creature's head reminded him of a panther, "but that size? Unbelievable."

The experience pretty much put a damper on that particular relationship, said Moe. "I did not call her for a couple of days, as we were like in shock or something. We never told anyone about this for years afterwards. She married someone else, as I did, and we went on with our lives."

Moe speculated later that whatever the creature was, it urinated on his car to mark its territory. He also found mud smeared up to the windows from when it had rubbed against the vehicle. "It broke the front wing vent, because I had to go to the junkyard and get a door for twenty-five dollars," Moe added, "which I thought was a rip."

Moe thought about going back with his twenty-gauge and looking for tracks, but he was afraid his shotgun wouldn't be big enough to protect him from something with a ten-foot arm span. "The whole place was his, as far as I was concerned ... this is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!"

When I asked Moe later about the animal's fur, he recalled it as long and shaggy, and the ears as "pointy and on top of the head, cat-like." He also estimated the yellow eyes as being about ten inches apart. He did not make eye contact with it because it ducked back down as he moved to the steering wheel.

If this really was a panther, it would have to be one gigantic cat. Everything but the catlike head with pointy ears sounds more like Bigfoot—the size, the smell, the longer, shaggy fur, and the car shaking as well.

Cougars were once plentiful in this region as well as many other areas of the country, and Hartley H. T. Jackson reports in *Mammals of Wisconsin*

that historical records from 1884 noted “a black panther being shot near Gordon last winter.” Cougars have turned up in other states long after they were supposed to be extinct. John Keel, in *The Complete Guide to Mysterious Beings*, described a “giant mystery ‘panther’” that turned up in Connecticut in 1967, shuffling through the community of West Rock and later showing up near a state senator’s home near Branford. The creature was never found.

There are other historical precedents. Loren Coleman points out in his *Mysterious America* that researcher Mark Hall searched old newspapers and found articles on “many old mystery felines in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio.” Coleman states that Hall’s searches demonstrate there are peaks of such sightings throughout history. He also mentions a story by Bruce Wright about seven hundred people tracking down a black panther in Pennsylvania just a decade before Moe’s car-rattling episode.

The obvious “answer” most people think of, and there are times they would be right, is that such an animal must have escaped from a zoo, circus, exotic animal rescue farm, or private pet compound. There is, in fact, an exotic rescue farm in southeastern Wisconsin near the Illinois border, called Valley of the Kings Sanctuary and Retreat.

The farm has about fifty big cats, including a huge liger, or hybrid lion/tiger, which might approximate the size of the Wadsworth creature. I’ve seen the liger myself, and it has a head almost twice the size of a normal “big cat.” Named Nook, it weighs fifteen hundred whopping pounds and looks to be about the size of a small pony. But it is sandy in color, is of gentle disposition, and has never escaped. Valley of the Kings was not in operation in 1964, and indeed they claim their animals, which also include wolves, wolf hybrids, bears, and even a camel, have not escaped.

Many private owners of exotic animals could not make that claim. And many states have no laws against owning exotic animals as pets. In 2001 in Missouri, for instance, a hundred-pound African lion named Simba was spotted napping on a rural highway near the Lake of the Ozarks. He had escaped from a private owner, who kept him legally.

Keel’s *Mysterious Beings* makes the case that stories from early explorers and Native American histories show large feline tracks have been noted for centuries. And black panther sightings have become a whole subcategory of “cryptid” or “hidden” animals. But what if it was not a black

panther turning Wadsworth's Lover's Lane into something from a 1950s horror movie?

Although Moe's impression was of a feline head, the fact that it did have "pointy," upright ears along with Moe's inability to clearly see the head's features through the steam does leave the door open for a canine interpretation as well. Some dogs, such as rottweilers, have wider heads with a rounded appearance. If we then picture a canine head on the large, shaggy, dark-haired body with a strange attraction to cars, it does start sounding like the Beast of Bray Road. Of course, geographically, the next closest Wisconsin sighting would be in 1992 in New Munster. That was twenty-eight years later but only about twenty miles northwest as the crow flies.

Because we are talking about Illinois fauna, I should also mention that Bigfoot sightings are not rare in Illinois, as Jay Rath's book *The I-Files: True Reports of Unexplained Phenomena in Illinois* documents. His book recounts dozens of possible sightings, from 1912 to 1979. Descriptions range from "ten-foot black creature with a round, hairy face" (very like the Wadsworth sighting) to "six feet tall, brown, had stooped shoulders and was trotting along a creek bank." However, the Wadsworth sighting is much closer geographically to the Wisconsin sightings than to any of the Illinois creature reports, most of which are scattered around the central to southern portions of that state.

In keeping with the subject of ambiguous sightings that occurred a distance away from Bray Road, there is one more I'd like to include.

The Snowmobile Watcher

We are moving north this time, in fact almost due north from Wadsworth, past Green Bay, Wisconsin, to Marinette County. The year was 1980, and Marv Kirschnik was spending his Christmas vacation snowmobiling with some buddies. They were based at a cabin near Pembine. Kirschnik, who designs, creates, and sells hand-carved wooden marionettes of characters such as the Frog Prince or Elvis Presley bears, and who owns a bead and gift shop in Williams Bay called "Mrs. Beadz," has kept pretty quiet about the incident since it happened. He said, "I didn't even tell my good friends."

Their vacation was almost over, and the group decided to take one last ride through the wilderness trails, mostly on county forestland, to a restaurant one of the group knew about. The few towns in that area—Amberg, Dunbar, Niagara—are tiny and spaced far apart, surrounded by deep woods. The Menominee River runs nearby. Just to the southwest of Pembine is the Potawatomi Indian Reservation.

The adventurers headed out for the Four Seasons Club on Miscauno Island, traveling northeast from Pembine on trails set into twenty-five-foot-wide firebreaks, cleared areas chopped away to stop forest fires from spreading.

“It was pretty cold,” said Kirschnik when he told me this story recently, “and they were predicting snow.” Still, he and his friends made it to the restaurant without incident. “We had a nice dinner, a couple of drinks, and sat by the fire for a while, but we were not drunk.” They left the lodge at 1:30 in the afternoon, with three inches of fresh snow on the ground to speed their way home.

After about ten minutes of riding, they came to a clear-cut area and Kirschnik’s troubles began. “It was so cold I was having trouble with my snowmobile,” he explained. His machine stalled at the bottom of a hill, and Kirschnik couldn’t immediately get it going again. His buddies, confident that he would get the machine started, decided to plow on ahead without him. So Kirschnik, completely alone in the middle of a vast forest, began pulling on his starter in earnest.

“I could see their taillights disappearing, and then it got really quiet,” he said. “I had this feeling of something behind me, and I heard noises twenty feet to my left. I was getting scared because there are bears out here.”

Kirschnik finally induced his sled’s engine to spit out a promising little cough, when he heard the noise to his left again. He yanked one more frantic, heartfelt pull and, with relief, heard the engine roar to life. “I jumped on my sled,” he said, “and just as I got started, I looked to my left once more and saw two big yellow eyes looking at me. They were too high up for a bear.” Kirschnik calculated later that they had to be at least seven feet off the ground. “I could make out this big shadow behind the eyes,” he said, “and as I went by, the eyes followed me.”

Kirschnik sped off, “full throttle all the way,” and did not look back. “When I got back to the camp, the guys said I looked like I’d seen a ghost,”

he said. “I was shaking. I never did do much snowmobiling after that.”

Kirschnik described the dark shape as “manlike.” He doesn’t think it was a bear. “I’ve seen bears up there,” he said, “and these eyes were too high up, too large, too far apart, and too yellow.” He thought of going back to look for prints but couldn’t bring himself to do it. Although his buddies joked about his sighting, they wouldn’t go back, either. “I thought I’d seen it all, but that was it,” said Kirschnik.

At first blush, this sounds like a classic Bigfoot sighting: tall, dark, and yellow-eyed, watching silently from the woods. And the terrain, remote and heavily forested, is typical of Bigfoot turf. But again, it must be noted that hidden in the shadows of a deep pine forest on an overcast day, the creature’s ear and facial structure were not visible to Kirschnik. It could have been canine, feline, lupine, ursine, or humine for all we know.

In fact, it is most reminiscent of the sighting north of LaGrange on Highway H, where the couple saw the same sort of dark, shadowy thing with glowing yellow eyes that were set wide apart and too far off the ground to be a cow or dog. But the wide-set, yellow eyes also sound like Richard Moe’s giant black panther.

If these creatures are indeed all the same being, all that can be said with certainty is that it is very big, very hairy, very strong, and fascinated with humans. I would love for all the sightings to match up exactly, but there are some differences among them. Either we have Bigfoot, werewolves, giant hybrid dogs, and panthers with ten-foot arm spans, or we have witnesses all reporting versions of the same things that differ slightly due to light conditions, personal vision, preconceptions, and so on. Or—and I’ll climb out on that thin, thin limb with my “other realm” interpretation—perhaps we have witnesses each seeing what the “unknown sorcerer” wants them to see.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE WEREWOLF IN YOUR LIVING ROOM

A savage beast brings terror to this lonely stretch of road in Walworth County, Wisconsin....

—*In Search Of ...*, SCI FI Channel

Those strange yellow eyes were coming towards us, lumbering towards us.

—*Animal Legends*, Animal Planet Channel

Could the Beast of Bray Road be a real, live werewolf?

—*Mystery Hunters*, Discovery Kids Channel

THESE QUOTES are a sampling of lead statements from television shows about the Beast of Bray Road. They are very effective. I know I'd be reluctant to channel-surf after hearing any one of those sentences. Savage beasts? Strange yellow eyes? The writers of these shows know what they are doing. And I don't really blame them for doing it.

Having written this book and having also filled a request for a screenplay on the Beast of Bray Road, I can hardly complain about any media outlet ramping up ratings with a werewolf show. But every time a producer calls me about assisting in yet another expedition to Bray Road, I wonder what the effect of all these slick productions—Hollywood werewolf images and special effects combined with sound bites from me and a few hardy local witnesses—will finally be on the field of cryptozoology. Will the brief “segments” help anyone solve the puzzle, or will seeing all those

quick flashes of fang and fur just reinforce the general notion that such sightings can't be real?

Earlier, I discussed my fictional screenplay that was never made. There isn't much else to say about it, except it was a lot of fun to write even if it did miss the silver screen three times. And being mostly fictional except for the sightings woven into the story line and the Cree legend that served as inspiration, my movie would really not have shed any more light upon the Beast of Bray Road mystery than have all five national TV shows that featured it in their electronic sideshows.

Shedding light on an obscure subject is much better accomplished by nonfiction films or documentaries, if there is such an animal as a truly nonfictional documentary. There are legends about people who have sighted this elusive film species, but it's usually been in an isolated apartment on a tiny, blurry screen with poor sound. Video recordings of these rare shows have proved inconclusive, and hard evidence like still shots or transcripts are in short supply.

So, do completely factual documentaries really exist? It depends on whether you believe the few witnesses. Some may be explained by special effects; others may have evolved from long-ago episodes of "Truth or Consequences." Sometimes people's minds play tricks on them, such as when they think they are seeing a true documentary but it is just a garden variety "reality" TV show that has puffed itself up in aggression.

Still, when a producer pack howls for me to come join them for a run with the wild cameras, I have always complied because I figure there is a better chance of getting things right if I'm telling my own story.

In a previous chapter I mentioned the new "In Search Of ..." series, and I will elaborate just a bit here. As the sequel to an old, popular series with the same name, the SCI FI Channel's new "In Search Of ..." with host Mitch Pileggi was eagerly awaited by many fans. One of the first shows, which also included "The Curse of King Tut's Tomb" and other tried-and-true paranormal topics, promised a good evil-eye view of the Bray Road Beast. I did my best to help.

Every camera crew comes out here secretly hoping that if they go to Bray Road, something scary will obligingly hop out from the bushes and drip a little gore for the camera. The amiable "In Search Of ..." producer and staff drove out to Bray Road with me in June 2001, on an overcast day with enough wind to make it really hard for the sound man to do his job.

A family on motorbikes buzzed by and then swung back to chat, airplanes zoomed low overhead, and an older woman in a giant old boat of an automobile stopped and asked in a Russian accent if we needed any help. The crew finally asked if they could film at my house, on my deck. At least they got their canine shot, of my little white Lhasa apso, Tundra Rose.

They also filmed inside my house, and when they were just winding up, through the open windows floated the eerie scream of a red-tailed hawk gliding somewhere nearby. The sound bounced off the ceiling and echoed, and then the hawk sang again. The crew was a bit disturbed, wanting to know what the hell that was. It sounded like the soul of the Wisconsin woods, but I told them it was a red-tail. At least they had one thrill. And they did do a good job with their story.

Of course the TV footage on the finished show started with a mournful wolf howl. The errors were minor, such as saying this was the tiny community of Walworth instead of Walworth County. (There is a tiny community named Walworth in Walworth County, but it hasn't been the location of any sightings I'm aware of.) The reenactment of the Bray Road Beast was worth a chuckle—a guy in a classic werewolf suit noisily chomping what looked like a bloody pot holder.

The best part was probably the interview with Lt. Ronald Person of the Walworth County sheriff's department, who wore a big, white "Boss Hogg" hat and made the perfect picture of a small-town lawman, although most sheriff's personnel do not dress like that here. Person made the closest thing to an admission that I've heard from any area law enforcer that there could be something to the sightings other than a sick dog. He mentioned that he hadn't seen God, but that didn't mean he thought God didn't exist, and he also said that if one stretched the imagination, there was a possibility that werewolves could exist. I'm not sure I've even said that.

Even better was that he displayed one of the silver, hollow-tipped bullets that he said the department had issued "at the same time the werewolf story was running rampant in the newspapers." (How else could a werewolf story run but rampant?)

As I mentioned in Chapter 14, the show also featured witness Jessica Anderson, who noted that the creature she saw clawing at her window looked "starved, it looked like a starved, wolfish creature." It almost made you want to go find some fresh pavement patty and leave it out on Bray Road for the poor, hungry thing. And then, host Mitch Pileggi asked,

“Could it be the Bray Road werewolf is an evolutionary fluke with ties to an ancient past?”

He then introduced the well-known author and cryptozoologist Loren Coleman, who pointed to stories from the ancient Greeks about werewolves participating in their Olympic games. Coleman speculated that these Greek myths could have been based on a surviving population of Neanderthals. The remnant Neanderthals may have been hairier and more aggressive than their Cro-Magnon counterparts, Coleman explained, and thus they gave rise to the werewolf legend.

Whole volumes have been written on the subject of the above paragraph, and the few sentences allowed in the segment did not do the topic justice. Still, the show came out better than I expected.

Animal Planet Hunts Werewolves

A cable program that took a slightly different tack was “Animal Legends” from the Animal Planet Channel. The producers called me and then flew out here in October 1999. They had a truly difficult time finding any witnesses willing to tell their stories, but the show that aired the following March featured an anonymous woman I’d never met. Her sighting consisted of seeing some yellow eyes on Bray Road one night from her car. The show also featured salient comments from Todd Roll, an investigator of the paranormal who originally cofounded the Weird Wisconsin Web site with Richard Hendricks.

Another guest was a Racine man named John Gonzales, who has been working on a documentary about the Beast of Bray Road for a number of years (he interviewed me, too, some time ago). Gonzales contributed the statement that coyotes or hyenas will stand on their legs to seem more aggressive when threatened, and he also suggested that perhaps the Beast of Bray Road was a wolverine, probably for the same reasons I speculated upon in Chapter 14. Again, the show was an interesting little assemblage but put forth only a few hand-picked nuggets of information.

In all these shows, I’ve observed that the amount of witness and other testimony actually used, when all is edited and done, may differ greatly in amount and context from what was actually said by these people. All the shows have a specific list of questions ready to ask, and some even have a loose script to work from.

At the end of the day, the producers and writers of these shows should be held much more accountable for the content than guests who appear. As the voice-over always warned in the beginning of the original “Outer Limits” show in the 1960s, *they* control the vertical. *They* control the horizontal. And ultimately they control how people will view something like werewolves in Wisconsin.

You’re Never Too Young for Werewolves

The latest small-screen sortie into werewolf territory came from a children’s show based in Canada, “Mystery Hunters,” of the Discovery Kids Channel. They sent me a copy of one wonderfully produced episode before I agreed to work with them, and they also asked Weird Wisconsin’s Richard Hendricks to lend his expert opinion.

They coaxed witness Tom Brichta into appearing, talked to the local sheriff’s department, and even took my suggestion to check out the nearby Valley of the Kings Animal Sanctuary to see some wolves and wolf hybrids for themselves. I sent them a stack of background material on the sightings, and then they packed up their teenage host, Christina Broccolini, and flew on down to the Dairy State.

We shot take after take in a cornfield on Bray Road. The young host was very charming, and the crew was pleasant and meticulous. The result was a very well done and entertaining show, but in the end, it was exactly what it had intended itself to be: entertainment aimed at older elementary children.

Unfortunately, they got the location of Brichta’s sighting completely wrong, when the host started out by saying that Brichta was on Bray Road, rather than Highway 106 in Jefferson County. This error was repeated as the segment continued.

What difference does it make where Tom Brichta’s sightings occurred? Very little, if you are putting together an entertainment show. Not so much, probably, if you are a casual viewer. A lot, if you are trying to seriously research the phenomenon by plotting sighting locales. One good fact checker could have avoided the whole thing.

There was another incident in the “Mystery Hunters” show that sounds a clear warning that the “facts” presented on these programs may not be what they seem. It happened when Patrol Captain Scott McClory said to the

host, “I do have some files I’d like to show you,” and handed her a manila file folder marked “werewolf.” “This is the only file we have on the werewolf,” he added.

When I saw that on the finished show, I wondered if by some chance it was the same folder Jon Fredrickson had shown me at Lakeland Animal Shelter some eleven years ago. That got me excited, since I would really like to have another look at that folder. But McClory later told me by phone that it was not the original folder from the shelter. “It was created for them [the producers] for the show,” he said. In other words, it was just a prop. I *will* say that it pays to take anything you see on TV with a grain of dried wolfsbane.

So, do these shows help the cause of cryptozoology or provide even an incisor’s worth of insight into the phenomena they showcase? I think that generally they do help by stimulating interest in topics that don’t get discussed elsewhere on television. They mean well, and most seem to do a modicum of research on their own; I still have “Inside Edition” to thank for the old Wisconsin werewolf stories.

As for providing insight, that’s another matter. The few canned responses permitted within the time frame of a twenty- or even thirty-minute segment, minus commercial minutes, can hardly begin to unravel true mysteries of the ages. In that time frame, it’s tough to even work in a mundane platitude, though most shows doggedly manage to do so. As the “In Search Of ...” host intoned in his closing statement: “The truth and the beast may lie hidden beneath human skin until the next full moon”—or at least ‘til the next commercial.

And yet, roomy with improvement possibilities as they may be, I’d still watch any one of these shows before just about anything else on TV. Such is the power of the unexplained. They had me at “Owoooooo.”

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE BEAST ONLINE BRINGS TALES GALORE

WHEN THE BRAY ROAD stories first started going national, I began to get letters with requests to “send me everything you have about the werewolf.” This started to get expensive and time-consuming, so I provided Elkhorn’s public library with a file folder of clippings for an easily accessed resource.

Still, interest in the subject never seemed to wane. Along about that time, a new-fangled phenomenon called the Internet burst onto the international scene. And I soon found the perfect place to deposit my werewolf research droppings: on a Web site entitled Weird Wisconsin (www.weird-wi.com) run by Richard Hendricks.

Started by Hendricks and colleague Todd Roll, the site was a witty compendium of everything that has made the Cheese State the place all TV sitcoms call upon when they want a reference to someplace quirky. From UFOs to Jeffrey Dahmer, Weird Wisconsin had it all.

Hendricks made a trip to the wilds of Walworth County to pick up a sampling of my archives, and I interviewed him for an article in *The Week* at the same time. True to his word, Hendricks gave the Beast his own little corner of the site to prowl, somewhere near the little cubicle occupied by local lake monsters.

A year or two later, I started my own Web site and of course included a Beast of Bray Road home page. Between Hendricks’ site and mine, very interesting e-mail began to come in as a whole new audience learned about the sightings. Some writers were just curious, some sent blurry photos of their cousin Vinny standing in a cornfield in a werewolf Halloween mask, but others had tales they wanted to get off their chests.

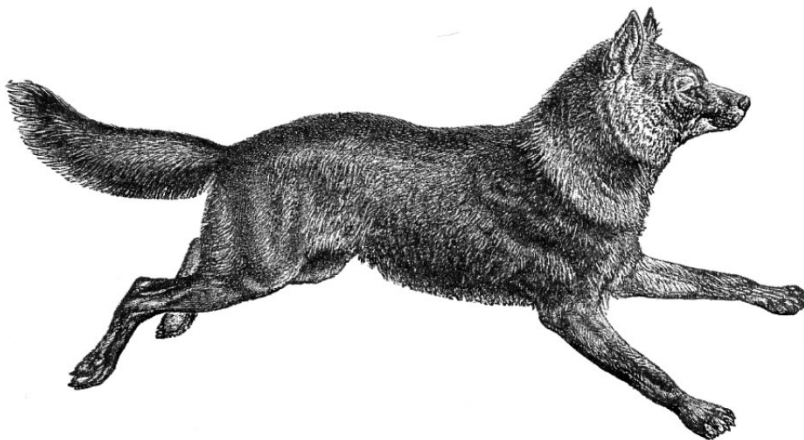
The Frightened Farmer

One e-mailer turned out to be the son of an old friend of mine from college. Nate Sterken, who farms with his parents outside of Delavan, Wisconsin, wrote that he believed “there are several werewolves in Walworth and the surrounding counties. ”And he did believe he had an experience with one.

“The only encounter I have had cannot be witnessed as a wolf-type creature,” he wrote, “but I have heard it on two accounts. In June 2001, I finished fieldwork at 9:30 about one mile away from County P in a field in Turtle Valley. I was perhaps ten feet from my truck when an incredibly loud roar sounded from the woods, which were about an eighth of a mile away.

“But any noise that loud echoes throughout the valley,” he continued, “and it did. It was amazingly loud and clear. It wasn’t quite a howl, more like a bellowing roar. The most logical thing I could think of was that it came from a bear.” Sterken made a fast run for his truck.

Sterken was seventeen at the time that happened, he said. After arriving home he told his father what he heard, thinking he would be laughed off. “But he somberly told me that ten years ago, he had finished planting corn around ten at night in a field in the same woods, set in the trees,” wrote Nate. “He was at his truck when the whole woods around him erupted in a single roar. His logical thinking was that it was a raccoon or badger or something, but he too said it scared him and he left hurriedly.”



Some people think the Beast is a wolf.

Sterken added that in early May 2001, he was listening to coyotes howling around 11:00 P.M. one night when suddenly, “one long, lower howl echoed throughout the valley, and every coyote shut up immediately. Then it was quiet ... it is a chilling sound and I don’t know if I could handle seeing what makes that sound.”

Sterken was not the only person for whom hearing was believing.

The Louisiana Screamer

Not in Wisconsin but still bloodcurdling was the tale that a woman named Jessica e-mailed me from southeastern Louisiana. It was the summer of 2000, she said, when she began hearing a “strange howling screaming noise” coming from the woods near her house. She had never heard anything like it there, she said, and it terrified her dogs. The sound seemed to return about once a month, she said, and is the “most horrid sound I have ever heard.” Other relatives and neighbors have heard it too.

More frightening, a neighbor’s golden Lab was found, shredded and torn to pieces, in those same woods. Local livestock have also been attacked and killed, she said. A friend of hers who also heard the screams saw the eyes of the creature making them and described them as “orangish green.”

“I Ran Over the Werewolf”

If there hadn’t been other sightings and encounters in the years since, I might have taken this next story for the Beast of Bray Road’s swan song. A man named Mitch (I couldn’t locate him a year later to ask permission to use his full name) e-mailed me to say he and a friend were returning to Janesville from Milwaukee one night via County Highway A, which runs east and west from near East Troy through the Lauderdale Lakes area and north of Delavan.

“We ran over SOMETHING big in the road,” he wrote. “Not being sure what it was, we turned around for another look. It looked like a wolf, or a big dog, except it had silver/brown hair and stretched across the road. I mean its tail was on the centerline, and the head was quite close to the shoulder!

“Even though I had been drinking,” Mitch admitted, “I would say confidently that it was at least six or seven feet long. We angled the car a

few times to get a better look but could not make out the face, much less WHAT kind of animal it was. And even though I'm not a wimp by any measure, I wouldn't get out of the car that night for a closer look. We shrugged our shoulders and promptly forgot the whole thing. Until a friend of mine was dating a girl from Elkhorn and she brought up the Beast of Bray Road."

Mitch added that he was not a religious person, nor did he believe in ghosts, aliens, or the afterlife. "What I saw that night was NOT a dog, bear, deer, human, or goat ... the only thing that would fit is wolf, and there aren't any around here, and the DNR tracks the ones up north. The only other thing I can tell you is that there wasn't much blood ... even though it was lying in the road when we ran it over."

I mentioned this one to Lt. McClory of the Walworth County sheriff's department, and he wondered why the carcass hadn't been collected if the story were true. But what if there *was* no carcass? Remember the Argentine *lobizon* in Chapter 12 that took a licking and kept on ticking? After the family beat the animal to what they thought was death, it still got up and ran away as if nothing happened. Something as large as what Mitch described might not have been killed by the impact, just stunned, particularly if it wasn't even bloody. Quite often people will hit a deer and believe it to be dead, only to see it spring to life and bound away when it comes to.

Some would argue with Mitch's contention that, although the animal looked like a wolf, it could not have been one because there are none in our area. Wolves have made quite a comeback in northern areas, and there is nothing to prevent one from traveling south. Not every wolf has a tracking device.

The creature that Mitch saw, however, sounds gigantic for a wolf. Although they can weigh up to one hundred fifty pounds and stand over two feet high at the shoulder, it's hard to imagine even the largest wolf stretching across half the two-lane highway. And if it was a wolf and it was dead, the carcass should have been collected, and it would have been headline news.

It sounds like what Mitch saw was something other than a mere wolf, though I don't know what, and I think that once his car left the area, it probably picked itself up, shook itself off, and loped off into the nearest cornfield.

I've had other e-mailed sightings, too; a canine obedience trainer named Susan Darsch wrote me that she knew what the Beast of Bray Road was ... a wolf. "It's been so long [since] wolves have been seen in the wild," she said, "that people have forgotten how big they are."

Darsch noted that she saw a wolf hybrid munching a deer just off Interstate 94 near Lake Mills in 2000. "In every way it looked like a wolf," she wrote, "but the neck ruff was very wooly like a malamute and there was a collar with tags on it. If the sun hadn't sparkled off the tags I'd have thought it was all wolf."

Darsch also calculated that if a gray wolf, which is native to Wisconsin, measuring twenty-six to thirty-eight inches tall at the shoulder should stand on two feet, it would be five to seven feet tall. "Wolves are longer in the back than their legs are long," she added, "thus measurement would include length of hind legs, length of back (hips to shoulders), and length of neck and height of skull."

That could definitely account for the estimated size of many of the animals seen by Bray Road and Jefferson County witnesses. It still doesn't quite explain the size of the "dead" wolf seen by Mitch, because the hind legs would not be included in his estimate, just tail to nose from the way he described it.

Another e-mailer worthy of inclusion here was a young man named Brandon from near Marshfield, in Wood County, just north of the center of the state. He wrote that in 1999 his two older sisters saw something in their yard that scared them into tears. They had been sitting outside in their mother's car, listening to music on the radio. Brandon was sent outside to tell them supper was ready. A few minutes later his sisters came flying into the house breathing heavily and crying. They told the family there was some huge animal in the yard. Outside, they could hear their pet dog barking furiously at something.

The girls described what they saw when they left the car to come inside as a "giant wolf or dog of some sort." They said it had long, brownish hair, long legs, and a large head. It stared at the girls for several endless seconds, then crouched as if about to spring at them. The girls bolted for the house, and it evidently did not pursue them.

Brandon said he and his brother grabbed their rifles and went out to investigate, but whatever it was had left the yard. They did hear something crashing through the brush nearby. According to Brandon, it never returned.

No mention was made of this creature standing on two legs, but it fits many of the descriptions in other ways, particularly in the large size, the wolfish looks, and the staring. It's possible it was a timber wolf, especially so far north, but the coloration doesn't suggest it. I'm sure these girls would be familiar with bears, living where they do. Another puzzlement.

Werewolf of Old Milwaukee

I think the best of the e-mailed sightings, however, is one that came from a reader of the Weird Wisconsin Web site, Kim Del Rio. Hendricks interviewed the antique dealer from Milwaukee and forwarded a transcript of her amazing sighting. I also interviewed Del Rio by phone in March 2003.

Del Rio lived on 50th Street and Wright in Milwaukee. One hot summer day in 1972 when she was seven years old, she and her mother suddenly heard a neighbor lady screaming, "Help, help, go away, go away!" As they ran to see what was happening, they noticed several other neighbors had already gathered to watch the events at the corner house across the street. Their neighbor was standing on her porch, yelling at a strange animal. Del Rio remembers the creature vividly, although the other neighbors refuse to talk about it and her mother's memory is vague.

The animal was doglike but standing on its hind legs! Del Rio said it had a "pointy" muzzle and doglike ears that were "at the top of its head and erect." Still, she said, "it wasn't a dog but it wasn't a monkey, either; it was canine." She noticed a long, bushy tail and said its forearms were shorter than the back legs. It wasn't gray like a coyote, she added, but "a dark brownish color, with some other color mixed in." It held its paws up in front of it, at chest height, and they were slightly curled.

Although the woman was yelling, the thing wouldn't budge. "It seemed really discombobulated and confused," said Del Rio. She thinks she may have turned to look at her mother, and when she looked back, it was gone, so she didn't see it run away. Del Rio now thinks it resembled a gelda baboon but that it was not a baboon. She also thinks it highly resembles some medieval drawings of werewolves.

Milwaukee may seem an unlikely place for a sighting like that, but Del Rio noted that her neighborhood was surrounded by parks, many of which had streams running through them. She said she has seen coyotes in the city,

and this was no coyote or even a coydog mix. Del Rio had heard of other sightings in suburban Pewaukee and Brookfield, she added.

The sighting has all the pointy earmarks of any of the dogman-wolfman encounters and especially makes me think of some of the Michigan Dogman incidents. And considering that she was willing to talk to me personally and allow her name to be used, I rate Del Rio's story quite high on the credibility list.

One more story that came in as a response to my Web site was from Indiana resident Richard Bondira, indicating the dogman-wolfman may be located farther east than Michigan. He told of a 1985 sighting made by a friend of his, an "S. Garity," in New Jersey!

Bondira prefaced his letter by noting that he did not believe in werewolves or think that something "supernatural" was going on, but he had known Garity for years and "she was not a tale-teller." Garity was on her way to a party one night, he said, in northwestern New Jersey near Mountain Lake in Warren County, a region that is mountainous and forested.

"Along the way she saw something," he wrote. "This is how she described it: 'It was at least as big as a man or bigger. It was covered with hair. It ran across the road carrying a dead deer in its arms. It had a head that resembled the head of a German shepherd with pointed ears, and a pointed snout. Its legs were not like a dog's but more reminded you of the thighs of a horse.' "When Garity got to the party, she was so shaken that a number of people set out with her to go back to the scene and look for the creature again. All they found, said Bondira, was "blood and guts," presumably from the deer.



Kim Del Rio described the Milwaukee werewolf's head as something like that of a baboon.

Bondira said he questioned her at length about the animal, and Garity insisted it was not a bear, man, wolf, Bigfoot, or person in a monster suit. He said Garity remained reluctant to talk about it, but when questioned, her story never changed.

What I find amazing is that the animal was carrying a deer “in its arms.” This means two things. First, it was running on two feet. And second, this thing was big and *strong*! Human deer hunters require ropes or sleds to drag deer out of the woods, and it’s still an arduous trek. The “German shepherd” head sounds exactly like the Bray Road and Michigan descriptions, where there were also sightings related to deer. And note that this incident occurred seven years before any of the Bray Road publicity. I also give this one high credibility marks.

I am hoping, of course, that this is not the last of sightings reported by e-mail, and yet there are always caveats. I’ve received other “sightings” that did not get reported here because they just didn’t pass the sniff test. The most obvious drawback is that anyone can write anything, and it’s hard to verify stories when you have not talked personally to the writer. It’s hard to contact these people for follow-up, too, as people switch e-mail addresses frequently and often use aliases. And if they are writing after viewing a Web site dedicated to such sightings, then they have a pretty good idea of how to describe what they “saw.”

On the other hand, the very anonymity of electronic messages also makes people feel freer to relate things they might not otherwise have told anyone. Other than a malicious desire to hoodwink Webmasters, there is no reward for them in making up a sighting. All they get, perhaps, is some relief at being able to share what often is a troubling memory.

And they still are good stories, no more or less provable than any other eyewitness accounts. I can't see any good reason to leave them out. As Charles Fort, an author and researcher of oddities, curiosities, and out-of-place things, wrote in his famous *Book of the Damned*, "Enormities and preposterousnesses will march. They will be 'proved' as well as Moses or Darwin or Lyell ever 'proved' anything."

If giant, shaggy, wolf-headed creatures with staring, caution-light yellow eyes are not "preposterousnesses," what in the world would be? Maybe they will be "proved" after all.

PART FOUR

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED
WHAT COULD... OR COULDN'T... IT BE?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

IT'S BEEN A long, strange trip, I know, through my werewolf family scrapbook. I wish the body of lore actually *was* something as neat and finite as a scrapbook, where everything is glued down, labeled neatly, and decorated with archival ink pens and self-stick decorations. It would be much easier to deal with.

Instead, we have something like an assemblage by surrealist collage artist Joseph Cornell, where mysterious people and animals inhabit ambiguous spaces, show up in no particular order amid enigmatic objects, and never seem sure of their relationship to their surroundings. These works aren't meant to preserve tidy memories; instead, they aim to document unsettling visions.

What to make of the dozens of varied sightings? I'm sure I don't know. And that's about all I'm sure of.

It's amazing to me that many people *do* think they know. Those who write or contact me are usually convinced that they have the answer and fervently wish me to agree with them, but the "answers" are all over the map, as are the "Bray Road" sightings. And for all we know, the witnesses may not all have seen the same thing. It's possible some saw natural dogs or wolves, some jumped at shadows, and others have accidentally stumbled upon something that had intended to stay hidden. For argument's sake, however, let's assume that most of the sightings were of the same creature so we can consider the possibilities.

Sick Coyote or Freakish Fidos

Mundane theories on the origin of the Beast of Bray Road abound. Probably the most oft-given explanations, and certainly the most frequent cited by local law enforcement, are the deformed coyote and big dog theories. If you remember, the Walworth County sheriff's department promoted both when asked their opinion by media. I think "coyote ugly" is the least likely of the two.

Coyotes really are not very big, measuring only four feet from nose to tail tip, on average, and weigh between twenty and fifty pounds. It is true that they are abundant in the area; one local farmer I interviewed has shot or trapped dozens every winter for the past twenty years. A state game manager told me that about four thousand coyotes have been trapped in Wisconsin every year since 1981. Experienced trackers can easily tell coyote prints from a dog's; coyotes often leave tracks in a straight line.

In the end, it's not too likely anyone coming upon a coyote in the wild would be surprised or terrified by its size or demeanor. I've seen them myself, and I wasn't perturbed in the least.

Dogs, however, are a different matter. Something like a hugely overgrown German shepherd mix, perhaps one with a dark coat, could appear very scary. An even larger dog that I've mentioned earlier is the Russian wolfhound or borzoi. They are much more unusual in the area, although there are breeders in the area, and the dogs stand as high as three feet at the shoulder. Their hair is long and silky when groomed, shaggy when allowed to grow wild. Seeing one in the wild would be very startling, and if wolves standing upright would be five to seven feet in height, a Borzoi would be at least that tall, or taller. They are not known to walk upright, of course, but anyone who has been to a "dog circus" will attest that dogs do have the ability to stand and even take some steps on their hind legs.



A borzoi, especially one standing on its hind legs, can be an intimidating sight in the wild.

—*courtesy of Kalen and Karen Dumke*

As I've often said, I do think it's very possible that some large, unusual mix or breed of dog, gone feral, could account for at least some of the sightings.

Bears and Other Big Carnivores

The next most-suggested explanation for the Bray Road Beast is that it was a bear—perhaps an immature male out scavenging. Bears are supremely good scavengers and have lost much of their shyness around humans since discovering the delights of garbage cans. Bears have pointed ears near the tops of their heads and dark shaggy fur, and they can sit and stand upright.



Bears are not unknown creatures in Wisconsin.

At least one area school bus driver has insisted to me that she saw a small bear cross the road in front of her bus one morning. Though bears are not “supposed” to be in this area, one was officially sighted on the outskirts of Madison in 2002. And in early March 2003, a five-hundred-pound “pet” black bear whose owner took it out for a walk in the forests of southern Illinois ran away in the Shawnee National Forest, forcing the Pope County sheriff to mount a bear hunt.

Still, in my opinion most of the creature sightings were likely not bears. Almost all the witnesses have said vehemently they know what bears

look like, and what they saw was not a bear. Bears do look quite different from wolves or dogs, especially in body shape.

In Chapter 14, I mentioned wolverines as another popular answer to the question of “what was it?” Although they can grow up to four feet long and leave footprints similar to those of a wolf or huge dog, I think wolverines are a little small to fit the witness descriptions around southern Wisconsin. They become slightly more likely as an explanation for the Appleton sightings. They do have a pungent, very unpleasant odor, are ravenous carnivores, are adept at staying unseen by humans, and sport shaggy, dark brown fur. They are also not thought to exist in the wild in Wisconsin anymore, but that does not mean one couldn’t be here.

A newer theory that has been put forth by some researchers is that the Beast of Bray Road is really a remnant population of an Ice Age, hyenalike carnivore. Loren Coleman wrote an article for *Fate* magazine in January 2000 describing this animal. He called it a “frightening-looking, primitive wolflike beast known to Indians and early Western pioneers.” In addition, the animal was “nearly black” and had “high shoulders and a back that sloped downward like a hyena.” Coleman was told by an Ioway Indian that his people had a name for this creature that “snuck into camps at night and stole dogs.” Its name, *shunka warak’in*, meant “carrying-off dogs.”

Supporting this information was a tale by zoologist Ross Hutchins, author of the 1977 book *Trails to Nature’s Mysteries*. Hutchins said his grandfather saw a “wolflike beast of dark color” chasing down some geese. It was described as having a sloping back like a hyena. The creature, named “ringdocus” by Hutchins’ grandfather, was actually caught, killed, and mounted, then displayed at a store in Idaho for years as a local curiosity.

More about the *shunka warak’in* can be found in *Cryptozoology A to Z* by Coleman and Jerome Clark. There is even a photo of the mounted beast, showing a shaggy animal with long snout, pointed ears, and “oddly shaped legs.” In an article about the Beast of Bray Road on *Weird Wisconsin*, Richard Hendricks added, “From certain angles, it could be said this beast appears to be standing on two legs, as its chest is prominent and rear lower than the front.”

The dark, wolflike creature part of the description does sound like the Bray Road Beast, I must admit. And humans are always being surprised by the travel power of animals. But to me, this creature just doesn’t sound anthropoid or manlike enough to fit the Bray Road Beast descriptions well.

Also, it has distinctive stripes or markings not reported by any Bray Road witnesses. Still, it's a possibility in some of the cases, especially because something very like the *shunka warak'in* has been sighted in and near Wisconsin.

Hendricks and Wausau researcher Todd Roll have had scattered reports of "large shaggy type creatures that witnesses say are not bears or wolves or anything of that ilk," says Hendricks. "Marathon County has seen scattered accounts from hunters of something called a 'bearwolf' as it seems to be a cross between the two. We've also collected similar reports of a 'Swamp Monster' that roamed through the Avon Bottoms State Wildlife Area in extreme southwestern Rock County. It ran around on all fours and looked like a bear/wolf type creature."

Also, Minneapolis-based researcher Mark A. Hall has received reports of sightings of hyenalike animals from Alberta, Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois. In addition, a very similar creature native to Tasmania, the thylacine or Tasmanian Tiger, has also been suggested as a possibility. It has supposedly been extinct in its native country for sixty years, but there are still sightings. How one would get to Walworth County, Wisconsin, would be a mystery in its own right. I think the American species is a better bet.

The Beast of Bray Road

Elkhorn, Wis.

Many have tried to identify it. . .



WereWolf



WereBear



WereDog



WereDeer



WerePerson



WereRabbit

. . . but the mystery continues.

follow it in . . . **theWeek**

Walworth County

Local poster showing some “were-creatures” as possible explanations for the Beast.

—courtesy of The Week

Black Panthers: Tantamount to a Catamount

The other possible candidate would be the native puma, also known as cougar, mountain lion, or catamount. They are usually tan in color, but on rare occasions dark-furred individuals have been captured. According to

Hartley H. T. Jackson's *Mammals of Wisconsin*, the puma can grow surprisingly large. An adult male puma can measure up to eight feet long and weigh up to 210 pounds.

Wildlife experts will say they are not to be found in the middle to southern part of Wisconsin, but sightings of both light and dark cougars seem to be more and more common. In Forest Lake, Minnesota, a local newspaper carried a story on March 5, 2003, about a "black panther" sighting in a resident's backyard. It was verified by a police officer who described it as about the size of a small Labrador retriever. The article said there had been other sightings in the region over the past four years.

This phenomenon is not restricted to North America. Black Panthers are being spotted in other countries, as well, with sightings almost epidemic in Great Britain. Near Lancaster, a local newspaper reported in late March 2003 that two separate motorists had seen a large, black feline running near the roadway. One woman described it as "at least twice as big as a Labrador and very muscular," with a "huge, huge stride."

The Canada lynx has also made a comeback in northern Minnesota, not far from Wisconsin, according to recent reports by wildlife officials there. But the lynx is a very distinctive animal and smaller than a puma.

There is also always a chance of an out-of-place "black" leopard popping up unexpectedly somewhere. On September 24, 2002, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported that four six-hundred to eight-hundred-pound African lions were shot and killed in the woods around Quitman, Arkansas. Neighbors believed they escaped from a nearby game farm, but the owner denied that. If African lions could be roaming the Arkansas forests, it's not impossible that leopards could stalk Wisconsin woods.

The trouble, again, is the witness reports. Only one witness, Richard Moe, said that what he saw looked like a panther, and that was in Illinois. The only other mention was Robert Bushman's allusion to the running posture of the creature he saw cross the road between Delavan and Elkhorn as reminding him of a panther's "flatout" running position, but he did not think what he saw looked feline in other respects.

Counting out other occasionally reported out-of-place animals such as kangaroos or even deer, that leaves us with one more possible "natural" animal—the human. But any human fitting the "Beast" descriptions would have to look and act most unnaturally to pull off the act.

Hairy Humans and Alternate Mental States

Psychiatric patients. Homeless people who prefer forests to soup kitchens. People who like to feel close to nature by never shaving and by running naked at night in the dark, even in winter. All of these have been suggested to me as specimens of the *human* zoo some think responsible for the Beast of Bray Road sightings.

It's true that Bray Road is located near a hospital that treats psychiatric patients as part of its services. But to say that one of those patients regularly managed to get out at night and lurk around local farms and cornfields for the past several decades, and was also hairy enough to be mistaken for an animal, is preposterous. Even the "wild man of LaGrange" was not thought by those who saw him to be other than human, wild as he may have seemed to his more genteel neighbors.

The idea of free-ranging nudists is also ludicrous, considering many of the sightings took place in late fall, winter, and early spring when temperatures in Wisconsin require clothing to prevent hypothermia and death.

Although there are some very hirsute individuals living among us, truly hairy humans, those with hypertrichosis (as discussed in Chapter 11) are extremely rare. If one were living anywhere in this vicinity, he would be well known. The condition is hereditary. So to think that a family of hypertrichosis carriers could live here, secretly produce a hairy child, and then turn it out to roam the woods and ditches of Walworth and Jefferson Counties without raising suspicions...well, let's just say the likelihood is lower than a road-killed squirrel's blood pressure.

Stupid Wolf Tricks and Optical Delusions

Of course, the ultimate faux werewolf would be the prankster in a fuzzy Halloween suit or mask of some sort. That's plausible for one or two of our cases, especially after widespread publicity roused local interest. But most of the sightings occurred in lonely, late-night settings where the likelihood of even being seen by anyone was low. There would have to be a whole string of pranksters spanning generations and roaming geographically afar, risking their lives by dashing across highways in front of speeding cars.

There was one famous case of such a hoax, however: the Choccolocco Monster of Alabama. The tale was reported, appropriately, on Halloween 2001 in the *Anniston (Ala.) Star* by Matthew Creamer, although it happened in 1969 in Calhoun County. The legend was that several people had reported a giant, furry animal with horns lurking in wooded areas there. Years later, a man named Neal Williamson admitted that when he was fifteen, he concocted a costume from a cow skull and a long black coat and danced around the roadside in various places four different times just for something to do. He stopped only after being shot at. Williamson, however, could offer no proof that he was the real Choccolocco monster. But most people in Calhoun County believed him.

This type of hoax would be more seriously considered in our southeastern Wisconsin sightings if there were only a handful of encounters rather than dozens, and if witness observations had been less detailed than most of them are. However, I have recently heard rumors that after the Bray Road sightings became known, some young teens who lived out that way may have pulled a prank or two with a Halloween mask. No one has admitted anything, though, and one or two unreported incidents would have no effect on the widespread sightings we know about.

Another variety of hoax is the unwitting kind, where someone does see something and then in good faith and all honesty misinterprets what he or she saw. An incident of this type that could have inspired all sorts of legends was reported in Delavan, Wisconsin, at what is now called Lake Comus (then Lake Como) on May 11, 1911.

An article in the *Delavan Enterprise* said some ladies visiting Spring Grove Cemetery on the shores of the small lake just a block from downtown Delavan reported “a mammoth sea serpent disporting itself in the middle of the lake.” They quickly called the cemetery’s sexton, and the whole group watched the strange creature swim. “It had a head like a horse and would come up to the surface frequently and spout forth water like a whale and again almost disappear. A long wake at the rear seemed to indicate a vast length,” wrote the *Enterprise*.

Unfortunately, the reason it had a head like a horse was that the creature *was* a horse. It turned out that a delivery steed belonging to Mr. L. Hanson had decided to swim the lake to get to a better pasture. When it hit the weedy part of Comus, it kept sinking and then rising up to breathe, thereby giving “a splendid imitation of the traditional sea serpent.” The

cemetery ladies did see something unusual, and they were not out to deceive anyone. Their brains simply misinterpreted what their eyes reported.

I am not saying for a minute that I think that the Bray Road sightings are hoaxes of either type. Most are too specific and close-up for that. But optical delusion should never be entirely discounted in descriptions involving human eyes and brains.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Beyond the Pale of the Hairy Tale

AFTER LOOKING at possible “Beast” origins among the species that boast scientific stamps of approval, we still have to consider other creatures not sanctioned by anything official. Some may not be species at all. Some may not even be visible. And that may be a good thing.

What About Bigfoot?

Probably the most frequent question I get is, How do you know it isn't Bigfoot? Well, I don't know that it is or isn't. Remember, the Bigfoot is arguably not a creature that is “proved” to exist yet either, even though many people believe it does, based on tracks, extensive sightings reports, and more.

Bigfoot's public image was dealt a severe blow in 2001 when nationally known Bigfoot aficionado Ray Wallace died, and his family revealed that Wallace was the creator of a giant hoax. Wallace had faked the huge footprints that were “discovered” in 1958 in California and widely publicized.

Cryptozoologist Loren Coleman disputes the idea that Bigfoot is a total hoax, however, in a recent issue of *Fate* magazine, pointing to other supporting evidence of such creatures, which can vary in height and features, from around the world and throughout time. Many other researchers (and sighters) agree with Coleman.

But is Bigfoot in Walworth County, Wisconsin? Some of the sightings surely sound like it. The rural Delavan man, for instance, is adamant that what he saw was Bigfoot. The Bark River sighting and Marv Kirschnik's Marinette County sighting are ambiguous enough to be Bigfoot and have earmarks such as size. Tom Brichta's sightings, though definitely of creatures with wolfish heads, still point to other Bigfoot trademarks such as

rotten odor, extreme height, hairiness, and bipedalism. And in his first sighting, Brichta did not really have a good look at the head. The 1936 Mark Schackelman drawing is almost a blend of canine and apelike features.

And as I mentioned before, at a *quick* glance, the surface differences between apelike and canine faces are mostly in ear placement, length of muzzle, and head width. Of course, big anatomical differences exist between the two species types, but a person getting a fast and blurry view in the darkness might easily form an impression that could go either way, depending on how the head was turned, depth of shadows, and angle of view.

One caveat I keep thinking of, though, is that most descriptions of Bigfoot or Sasquatch include a face that is closer to human than ape. And many of the Bray Road sightings do not describe something tall enough to match the usual eight-foot stature reported for the North American Bigfoot.

However, many cryptozoologists note despairingly that Bigfoot has become an oft-misused catchall name when many different species of “nape,” or North American ape (some would argue Bigfoot is actually a type of human), exist. Smaller versions, such as the slightly more petite, neckless, “marked hominid” described in Coleman and Huyghe’s *Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide* might fill the Wisconsin bill more accurately if only it had a more canine head.

Researcher Mark Hall has linked such hominid creatures to a skull found in 1926 in Greenland. The species was named *Homo gardarensis* because the skull was found at Gardar, an ancient bishopric of the Roman Catholic church where lie ruins of an ancient cathedral. (I can’t help but observe that the word *Gardar* sounds a lot like our “gadarrah,” the pronouncement of the creature at another Catholic site, Saint Colletta’s convent back in Jefferson, Wisconsin.)

For the record, the possibility of remnant Neanderthals or their descendents being mistaken for “wild men” here and in Europe have also been widely discussed by Hall, Coleman, and others in various books and publications. However, the more we learn about Neanderthals, the less different they seem. Most anthropologists now agree they had speech capabilities, and the latest studies show that their hands were as dexterous as ours. Yet their heads looked rather different in shape than ours, they could have been very hairy, and perhaps they did manage to leave some

descendants who made it to the New World while there was still a land bridge.

Mark Hall has gone so far as to suggest that the Neanderthals' descendants may be a species he calls "Shorter Hominids" from the northern parts of Canada, in a December 2001 article in *Wonders*, titled "The Dog-Headed Men and Other Primate Survivors." And he relates these to a people called "dog-headed men" described by ancient, northern Europeans that he thinks were also Neanderthal-related.

As the venerable researcher Ivan T. Sanderson said in his classic *Abominable Snowman: Legend Come to Life*, "There is not just one creature called *The Abominable Snowman*, but a whole raft of creatures distributed almost all over the world, of very considerable variety."

So if not Bigfoot, perhaps Bigfoot's little "Cousin Itt" (remember the long-haired critter in the "Addams Family" TV show?) visited Bray Road. It is possible the collection of Bray Road sightings could be explained by a combination of sightings of such a hominid species plus a very large, unusual, feral dog that happened to roam the same area at about the same time.

UFO Tourists

Researchers who write about these things have often noted that where Bigfoot roams, UFOs often fly. Now, for this theory to fly for the Beast of Bray Road, a person first must subscribe to the Bigfoot (or similar hominid) theory of origin. The believer then may also join the group that proposes that these mysterious creatures are either aliens here to explore our turf, "pets" of such aliens, or maybe even hybrid earth/alien creatures out on field trips.

Another version suggests that these creatures, assuming you believe all the sightings are in the Bigfoot family, are not necessarily aliens but are not flesh and blood, either. But unlike conjured-up werewolves, these noncorporeal entities are thought to be benevolent. A University of Wisconsin professor with the pen name Lunetta Woods wrote a book published by Galde Press entitled *Story in the Snow*, about a "psychic Sasquatch" that left footprints around her farm and that also was able to transmit spiritual advice for her family. It existed in another dimension, leaving tracks and making appearances only for their benefit.

Many people have also proposed that UFOs are “interdimensional,” also, making the pair a natural fit. I will leave hashing out the problems of interdimensional travel to the paranormal theorists and cutting-edge physicists. But everything in this section hearkens back to that idea of “window” areas many have written about, including John Keel in *The Complete Guide to Mysterious Beings*. Keel says, “The sudden appearances and disappearances of these wild, unknown creatures all over the world even in densely populated areas, suggests that they have some means of transportation or else they are deliberately dumped here and retrieved by some form of transformation...obviously, something far more complicated is involved.”

Is there another world just outside ours, as Keel suggests, whose inhabitants have found Walworth County a convenient, open “window”? It rather makes me want to go shopping for a good, heavy padlock.

King Lycaon and Other Shape-Shifters Revisited

This entry sort of straddles two categories. Lycanthropes are real people who believe they can transform either their physical or spirit bodies into wolves. As I said in Chapter 11, this requires belief that it is physically possible for humans to turn into wolves, through either sorcery, super mental powers, or inborn ability.

As for sorcery, Scott Corrales put it well when he said in an article in *Fate* magazine, “To believe in the summoning of entities involves a belief in ceremonial magic that not many are willing to concede, since the laws of the physical world demand that a given input be provided to obtain the desired output.”

Then there is the strong disagreement between self-avowed lycanthropes and doctors of psychology as to whether the effects are physical or mental. Or, perhaps, both. In England’s Bill Ramsey case, they seemed to be mostly psychological, but the way his body seemed to adapt itself to its wolfen mode always astonished those who saw it.

Besides, the belief that humans can turn into wolves has caused many people with no greater sin than hairy eyebrows to be tortured and/or killed around the world for many years. If I were a lycanthrope, I wouldn’t be too eager to bring the whole thing back to public consciousness.

I've already discussed Native American shape-shifters and other Amerindian creature legends at great length. I think they are most enticing because they have an underlying spirituality—a purpose and rationale behind them. We would like this creature to make sense. I think I am unqualified to identify Native American creatures in the field, myself, but these stories are certainly worthy of our notice.

Cult Connections

Another possible source of the appearance of wolf/dog entities lies in the idea that wolflike demons were somehow conjured up by some type of cult operating in the area. These entities could be in spirit form somehow made corporeal for a few quick laps run around the territory, or a human overshadowed with the appearance of a wolf. Such beliefs are compatible with reports of demons in the Bible, as well as with the religions of many cultures worldwide, but this is one area I'm uncomfortable researching locally.

The first *Strange Magazine* article on the Beast of Bray Road also made a point of noting various local paranormal manifestations, or hints of them. Writer Scarlett Sankey quoted a *Milwaukee Sentinel* article from June 15, 1991, entitled “Pets Mutilated, Cult Activity Suspected in Linn,” in which the county's animal control officer, Jon Fredrickson, described finding dozens of mutilated dog and cat carcasses and skeletons near a road in Linn Township, about ten miles south of Bray Road.

Fredrickson reported the animals had slit throats, were decapitated, or had their hearts removed and speculated that the odd kills could mean cult activities of some sort were taking place nearby. The bodies were disposed of quickly. I had interviewed Fredrickson numerous times, and he told me most animal-disposal cases were either people trying to get rid of dead pets or dogs killed in dogfighting. There were also cases of a few unscrupulous dog racers disposing of greyhounds past their prime, and even carcasses left from people who consider dog meat, or sometimes dog parts, a delicacy for their own tables.

Whether these grisly finds had anything to do with either the unspecified cults or the Beast of Bray Road sightings has been disputed. I have yet to find a clear link to either.

Sankey also quoted Fredrickson as saying that a “reliable source” told him that one night, someone saw a figure draped in black hood and cloak emerge from the carcass site, riding a black horse and followed by a large, black dog. Even with the black dog, there is still not necessarily a link to the sightings, because none of the “Beast” witnesses reported seeing any images like this with their sightings.

However, rumors I heard at the same general time as the first Bray Road stories did suggest some less-than-savory activities might be happening in the area. An abandoned house on Highway H, not far from Bray Road, was regularly visited by local high school kids and was known as a place for drinking parties. It was also rumored to host certain ritual activities that were never actually defined.

Some people brave enough to explore the place at the time said some rooms contained mattresses, discarded blue jeans, empty wine bottles—typical teenage party leftovers. However, another room was said to hold some kind of homemade altar or makeshift table, as well as black candles and other standard occult paraphernalia. At least one other house in the county, near Whitewater, was also said to be the site of similar, strange goings-on.

Links to occult practices with appearances of mystery beasts have been made other places in the world. Twenty miles northwest of Oxford, England, a weird group of megaliths called the Rollright Stones has been the site of odd occurrences for centuries, according to *Mystic Places: Mysteries of the Unknown*. One of these involved a scientist who once surprised a group of “occultists in the midst of a ritual” as he was testing the stones for magnetic and other energy currents. Other researchers at the site reported seeing various manifestations of things that would then disappear. One of the “things” observed was a large, furry animal!

In the book *Why People Believe Weird Things*, Michael Shermer calls the “Satanic panic of the 1980s” the closest thing to a “modern witch craze.” Shermer surveys several books and studies on the topic and comes to the conclusion that there was very little evidence to support the widespread fears about such cults.

Still, I know that there was some local evidence that looked suspicious at the time of the first Bray Road sightings. No one can say whether the two things were linked, and I’m going to leave it at that.

Indigenous Dogman

Finally, the fairy tale...or the hairy tail. The Bray Road theory that I would *like* to be correct, simply because I find it the most entertaining to think about, is what I call the indigenous dogman.

On the face of it, a native, manlike canine seems preposterous. Any time you find anthropoid or manlike bodies in zoology, there is an apelike or manlike head attached. That's why Bigfoot sightings are easier to accept, I think. Biologically, at least, their bodies seem plausible. One can postulate that Bigfoot is either a descendant or close family member of the Neanderthals or some other early hominid and pretty well get away with it.

Upright, primate bodies with dog heads on them, on the other hand, do not fit with known anthropological or zoological creatures, and in fact seem downright disturbing to most of us. Even baboons, with their doglike ears and muzzles, are still clearly not dogs or wolves.

However, when you listen closely to descriptions of the body of the Bray Road Beast and its cousin, the Michigan Dogman, it doesn't sound like man or ape, except for upright posture. And most apes, though they can walk erect, run on all fours or drag knuckles on the ground.



**The indigenous dogman, the creature that seems to most closely resemble the Beast
(author drawing).**

The Beast of Bray Road's legs are described as thin, "funny-looking," and so on, and the paws or "hands" have long, predator-style claws. It does not have proportionately long arms or drag its knuckles.

But what if there were some type of canine animal surviving from the early Ice Age that found it advantageous to walk on its hind legs from time to time? The process of natural selection and adaptation could work here as well as anywhere. The head would have to find a better position of balance, the spine and pelvis would need to realign, and I wonder if the dog-type feet could really support an upright frame. I am definitely no zoologist (any zoologist reading this is probably laughing his nicely balanced cranium off

at the mere suggestion of a dogman), but those seem like achievable adaptations, on the face of it. At least for the purposes of my fairy tale.

And it doesn't seem impossible that something intelligent enough to hide itself from predatory humans could have found refuge in the cliffs and dense woodland of the Kettle Moraine area, or especially in the deep forests and Great Lakes shoreline of northern Michigan, for decades or centuries.

With humans and other canines around, these dogmen would have to be wary animals, indeed, to survive. The land would not support many of them, and as encroaching humans decreased small game, they would learn to haunt the roadways for animals already killed by motor vehicles. They would be inordinately curious about the pinkish, similarly upright humans when they did encounter them on rare occasions. They would also learn to scare them off with their instinctive canine stare of aggression. They would manage to reproduce only in scanty numbers, but reproduce they would, which is how they have been seen for centuries and decades.

But their existence would be precarious. Living happily ever after is tough when you're dependent on run-over skunks for sustenance.

As in the case of Bigfoot evidence, the question always is, if these creatures exist, where are the skeletons? Well, the usual answer is we have no skeletons because their bodies would not last any longer in the woods than any other animals', thanks to the whole descending order of scavengers from mammals and birds down to microbes. And if a dogman body *were* found, it would probably just be taken for a large wolf or dog.

The indigenous dogman is not an original idea of mine. Such a creature has already been described in legends of the British Isles where it is called the "wulver." In an article in the November 2000 issue of *Fate* magazine, Dr. Karl P. N. Shuker told of a story from the Hebrides, islands lying off the coast of Scotland.

Shuker quotes a 1912 volume titled *Werewolves* by Elliott O'Donnell, who tells the tale of a Scotsman who was walking a dried-up lake bed when he found a human-looking skeleton with a wolf skull. He took the bones back to his house, and a young relative left alone with them saw the threatening image of a werewolf materialize at the kitchen window. The older man then returned the whole skeleton to the place he found it.

Shuker cited another book, also titled *Werewolves*, written in 1933 by Rev. Montague Summers, which told a very similar story from 1888 in Wales, where just the skull of an "extremely large doglike beast" was

found. The finder was a vacationing Oxford professor, and it was his wife who saw the werewolf at the window. Again, the skull was returned to its point of origin, a lake.

As Shuker points out, it's suspicious to have two such similar stories. He notes correctly that the second story could easily have been copied from the first. But that still leaves the first one to consider. Shuker compares these stories to the 1981 film "Wolfen," based on the novel by Whitley Strieber, about a race of intelligent wolfish creatures that walk upright.

And actually, the two stories about the crazed wolf-creature clawing at the window sound exactly like what witness Jessica Anderson saw near Geneva Lake. They also remind me of an e-mailed encounter that was sent to Richard Hendricks at his Weird Wisconsin site. A woman from Ely, Minnesota, recalled this happening in a trailer park there when she was a child, maybe five to seven years old.

The woman recalled that she heard tapping and scratching at a window that faced a wooded area one night while she was home with a baby-sitter, and when she moved the curtain to see what it was, there was a "wolf face" staring back at her. She said it had a long, thin snout and again those "yellowish" eyes. It next appeared on their porch and "wrestled" with her baby-sitter's brother who had run out there. She said the hind legs were doglike with small ankles and flat paws but bigger rounded "thighs." She said his "back legs bent funny like a dog's do," and he had a "dome-shaped" chest with a wolf head. Very odd, very wolfish.

This idea of a race of dogmen seems to be very old and widespread; remember the Greek tale about werewolf Olympians? Even explorer Marco Polo claimed to have landed on an island off the coast of Burma inhabited by dog-headed people. It is a wholly different thing from the idea of men transforming themselves temporarily into wolf form.

It's also extremely unlikely. But as I said, it's my hairy-tail ending.

Legend and Lore, Forevermore

It's going to frustrate some people, I know, that at the end of all this reporting and speculating there is still no final answer to what the Beast of Bray Road "really" was. Or is. At least there isn't a final answer for me. Doubtless some readers have clamped their jaws onto one of the previously mentioned options and will not be budged, even should the exact opposite

of what they have decided upon crouch on their front porch and croon a few bars of “Ain’t Nothin’ but a Hound Dog.”

That doesn’t bother me in the least. One person’s wolverine is another’s wulver. I guess I just don’t mind a mystery staying a mystery...in the absence of hard evidence. I’ve gone so far in this book as to state what seems likely and unlikely in my humble opinion, but until I see the creature for myself, that’s the best I can do.

The one thing I’m sure of, based on my experiences of the past ten years, is that humanity’s love-hate affair with the werewolf and its kin is not going away any time soon. That mysterious bond between *Homo sapiens* and *Canis lupus* will always be there, nipping at the edges of our consciousness and bidding us to bay a duet when the moon is full.

The Guess Who had it right when they sang about the famous, late disk jockey “Wolfman Jack”: “Clap for the Wolfman, you gonna dig him ‘til the day you die.”

A detailed map of Wisconsin with 20 numbered locations marked for a scavenger hunt. The locations are distributed across the state, with a concentration in the central and southern regions. The map includes major highways, cities, towns, and geographical features like Lake Michigan and Lake Geneva. A scale bar indicates distances up to 10 miles.

Numbered Locations:

- Bray Road
- Burlington
- Elkhorn
- Janesville
- Jefferson
- Jefferson
- Hebron
- Whitewater
- Hebron
- La Grange
- Lauderdale
- Palmyra
- Palmyra
- Hebron
- Fontana
- Lake Geneva
- New Munster
- Waukesha
- Milwaukee
- Zion

- 1 Bray Road
- .
- 2 “Pottsy,” on Potter’s Road
- .
- 3 Robert Bushman’s sighting, Highway 11
- .
- 4 Rural Delavan sighting
- .
- 5 Saint Colletta’s “gadarrah” sighting
- .

- 6 Jefferson County horse slashing
- .
- 7 Bark River sighting
- .
- 8 Glenn North's sighting
- .
- 9 Hebron
- .
- 1 LaGrange sighting
- 0
- .
- 1 Wild Man of LaGrange
- 1
- .
- 1 The Bluff Monster, Bluff Road
- 2
- .
- 1 Ugly Horse Ranch, "wolfen" stones
- 3
- .
- 1 Tom Brichta's sightings
- 4
- .
- 1 Jessica Anderson's sighting, Williams Bay
- 5
- .
- 1 Geneva National Golf Club sighting
- 6
- .
- 1 Martha Kerkman's sightings, New
- 7 Munster
- .
- 1 The Eddy, East Troy
- 8
- .

1 Kim Del Rio's sighting, Milwaukee
9

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2 Richard Moe's sighting, Wadsworth,
0 Illinois
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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1929** The Wild Man of LaGrange is reported—not a “werewolf” sighting per se but perhaps the source of some local legends.
- 1936** Mark Schackelman sees creature on Indian mound behind St. Coletta’s institution, Jefferson County, standing upright, uttering “gadarrah.”
- 1960s–1970s** The Eddy, large hairy creature, is rumored to stalk rural East Troy.
- 1964** Rural Delavan man sees creature crossing road upright and hurdling fences on either side, near Delavan. Describes it as more like “Bigfoot.”
- 1964** Richard Moe encounters large, black creature with furry paws; creature rocks car of parked couple in Wadsworth, Illinois (just south of Wisconsin border).
- 1970s** The Bluff Monster, large hairy creature, is seen by campers around Bluff Road, near LaGrange.
- 1972** At a Jefferson County farm, a creature slashes horse, leaving scratch marks on house seven feet above ground; incident is investigated by DNR agent David Gjetson.
- 1972** In Milwaukee, Kim Del Rio sees upright, doglike creature on neighbor’s lawn.
- Fall 1980** Ronald Nixon observes bipedal hairy hominid on shore of Bark River, north of Whitewater.
- Winter 1980** Marv Kirschnik, Marinette County, sees seven-foot-tall, dark-colored biped with glowing yellow eyes from snowmobile trail.
- Fall 1989** Scott Bray observes creature by rock pile on Bray Road, on all fours, dog- or coyotelike but larger.
- Fall 1989** Lori Endrizzi sees creature kneeling by side of Bray Road, holding “roadkill.”
- December 1990** Heather Bowey, Russell Gest, and three young cousins observe creature near creek near Loveland Road, Bray Road vicinity, both upright and on all fours.
- March 1990** Mike Etten sees creature holding roadkill on Bray Road, sitting on haunches.
- Fall 1991** Sharilyn Smage observes creature in cornfield on Bray Road, on all fours.
- October 1991** Doris Gipson sees creature near cornfield on Bray Road, running upright, lunging for car.
- November 1991** Tracks of “Pottsy” are seen in snow on Potter’s Road near Simons Feed Mill, Bray Road vicinity.
- November 1991** “Jennifer,” twenty-year-old radio call-in guest, and her boyfriend see creature running across road on two legs, probably Elkhorn vicinity.
- November 1991** The Robert Bushmans see creature dash across road on all fours on Highway 11 between Elkhorn and Delavan at 10:00 a.m.
- April 1992** Martha Kerkman sees creature in New Munster, western Kenosha County, on four legs Easter morning; friend saw same animal next day.
- August 1992** Tom Brichta and Chris Maxwell observe creature near cornfield on Highway 106, Jefferson County, standing upright, lunging for car.
- October 1992** Tom Brichta and Scott Freimund see creature near cornfield on Highway 106, Jefferson County, walking upright.
- 1992–1993** Mitch and friend run over large creature on Highway A, north of Delavan, western Walworth County; the creature, six to seven feet long, is stretched out on road, apparently dead.
- November 1995** “Sandy Doe” is menaced by huge, doglike creature on four legs near east shore of Lauderdale Lakes, at dusk.

February 1996 Glenn North sees very fast quadruped, “taller than a dog,” crossing Highway 12 between LaGrange and Whitewater in Walworth County.

1998 Jessica Anderson sees creature at her in-laws’ window in Williams Bay, near Geneva Lake.

1999 Young girls see huge, large-headed, wolflike animal in their yard near Marshfield, Wood County, Wisconsin.

June 2001 Nate Sterken hears bloodcurdling roar in woods near Highway P, north of Delavan; his father heard same sound ten years earlier.

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